









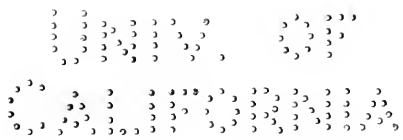






POETICAL WORKS  
OF  
MATTHEW ARNOLD







POETICAL WORKS

OF

MATTHEW ARNOLD

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HENRY MORSE STEPHENS



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EARLY POEMS





## SONNETS

### QUIET WORK

ONE lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,  
One lesson which in every wind is blown,  
One lesson of two duties kept at one  
Though the loud world proclaim their enmity—

Of toil unsever'd from tranquillity !  
Of labour, that in lasting fruit outgrows  
Far noisier schemes, accomplish'd in repose,  
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry !

Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,  
Man's fitful uproar mingling with his toil,  
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,

Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting ;  
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil,  
Labourers that shall not fail, when man is gone.

## TO A FRIEND

Who prof, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind?—  
 He much, the old man, who, clearest-soul'd of men,  
 Saw The Wide Prospect, and the Asian Fen,<sup>1</sup>  
 And 'Tmolus hill, and Smyrna bay, though blind.

Much he, whose friendship I not long since won,  
 That halting slave, who in Nicopolis  
 Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son  
 Clear'd Rome of what most shamed him. But be his

My special thanks, whose even-balanced soul,  
 From first youth tested up to extreme old age,  
 Business could not make dull, nor passion wild ;

Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole ;  
 The mellow glory of the Attic stage,  
 Singer of sweet Colonus, and its child.

## SHAKESPEARE

OTHERS abide our question. Thou art free.  
 We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,  
 Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,  
 Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,

Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,  
 Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place.  
 Spares but the cloudy border of his base  
 'To the foil'd searching of mortality ;

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,  
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,  
Didst tread on earth unguess'd at.—Better so!

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,  
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,  
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

## WRITTEN IN EMERSON'S ESSAYS

“O MONSTROUS, dead, unprofitable world,  
That thou canst hear, and hearing, hold thy way!  
A voice oracular hath peal'd to-day,  
To-day a hero's banner is unfurl'd;

Hast thou no lip for welcome?”—So I said.  
Man after man, the world smiled and pass'd by;  
A smile of wistful incredulity  
As though one spake of life unto the dead—

Scornful, and strange, and sorrowful, and full  
Of bitter knowledge. Yet the will is free;  
Strong is the soul, and wise, and beautiful;

The seeds of godlike power are in us still;  
Gods are we, bards, saints, heroes, if we will!—  
Dumb judges, answer, truth or mockery?

## WRITTEN IN BUTLER'S SERMONS

AFFECTIONS, Instincts, Principles, and Powers,  
 Impulse and Reason, Freedom and Control—  
 So men, unravelling God's harmonious whole,  
 Rend in a thousand shreds this life of ours.

Vain labour ! Deep and broad, where none may see,  
 Spring the foundations of that shadowy throne  
 Where man's one nature, queen-like, sits alone,  
 Centred in a majestic unity ;

And rays her powers, like sister-islands seen  
 Linking their coral arms under the sea,  
 Or cluster'd peaks with plunging gulfs between  
 Spann'd by ærial arches all of gold,  
 Whereo'er the chariot wheels of life are roll'd  
 In cloudy circles to eternity.

## TO THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

## ON HEARING HIM MISPRAISED

BECAUSE thou hast believed, the wheels of life  
 Stand never idle, but go always round ;  
 Not by their hands, who vex the patient ground,  
 Moved only ; but by genius, in the strife

Of all its chafing torrents after thaw,  
 Urged ; and to feed whose movement, spinning sand,  
 The feeble sons of pleasure set their hand ;  
 And, in this vision of the general law,

Hast labour'd, but with purpose ; hast become  
Laborious, persevering, serious, firm—  
For this, thy track, across the fretful foam

Of vehement actions without scope or term,  
Call'd history, keeps a splendour ; due to wit,  
Which saw one clue to life, and follow'd it.

### IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

#### TO A PREACHER

“ IN harmony with Nature ? ” Restless fool,  
Who with such heat dost preach what were to thee,  
When true, the last impossibility—  
To be like Nature strong, like Nature cool !

Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more,  
And in that *more* lie all his hopes of good.  
Nature is cruel, man is sick of blood ;  
Nature is stubborn, man would fain adore ;

Nature is fickle, man hath need of rest ;  
Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave ;  
Man would be mild, and with safe conscience blest.

Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends ;  
Nature and man can never be fast friends.  
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave !

## TO GEORGE CRUIKSHANK

ON SEEING, IN THE COUNTRY, HIS PICTURE OF  
 "THE BOTTLE"

ARTIST, whose hand, with horror wing'd, hath torn  
 From the rank life of towns this leaf! and flung  
 The prodigy of full-blown crime among  
 Valleys and men to middle fortune born,  
 Not innocent, indeed, yet not forlorn—  
 Say, what shall calm us when such guests intrude  
 Like comets on the heavenly solitude?  
 Shall breathless glades, cheer'd by shy Dian's horn,  
 Cold-bubbling springs, or caves?—Not so! The soul  
 Breasts her own griefs; and, urged too fiercely, says:  
 "Why tremble? True, the nobleness of man  
 May be by man effaced; man can control  
 To pain, to death, the bent of his own days.  
 Know thou the worst! So much, not more, he *can*."

## TO A REPUBLICAN FRIEND, 1848

GOD knows it, I am with you. If to prize  
 Those virtues, prized and practised by too few,  
 But prized, but loved, but eminent in you,  
 Man's fundamental life; if to despise  
 The barren optimistic sophistries  
 Of comfortable moles, whom what they do  
 Teaches the limit of the just and true  
 (And for such doing they require not eyes);

If sadness at the long heart-wasting show  
Wherein earth's great ones are disquieted ;  
If thoughts, not idle, while before me flow

The armies of the homeless and unfed—  
If these are yours, if this is what you are,  
Then am I yours, and what you feel, I share.

## CONTINUED

YET, when I muse on what life is, I seem  
Rather to patience prompted, than that proud  
Prospect of hope which France proclaims so loud—  
France, famed in all great arts, in none supreme ;

Seeing this vale, this earth, whereon we dream,  
Is on all sides o'ershadow'd by the high  
Uno'erleap'd Mountains of Necessity,  
Sparing us narrower margin than we deem.

Nor will that day dawn at a human nod,  
When, bursting through the network superposed  
By selfish occupation—plot and plan,

Lust, avarice, envy—liberated man,  
All difference with his fellow-mortal closed,  
Shall be left standing face to face with God.

## RELIGIOUS ISOLATION

TO THE SAME FRIEND

CHILDREN (as such forgive them) have I known,  
 Ever in their own eager pastime bent  
 To make the incurious bystander, intent  
 On his own swarming thoughts, an interest own—

Too fearful or too fond to play alone.  
 Do thou, whom light in thine own inmost soul  
 (Not less thy boast) illuminates, control  
 Wishes unworthy of a man full-grown.

What though the holy secret, which moulds thee,  
 Mould not the solid earth? though never winds  
 Have whisper'd it to the complaining sea,

Nature's great law, and law of all men's minds?—  
 To its own impulse every creature stirs;  
 Live by thy light, and earth will live by hers!

MYCERINUS<sup>2</sup>

“NOT by the justice that my father spurn'd,  
 Not for the thousands whom my father slew,  
 Altars unfed and temples overturn'd,  
 Cold hearts and thankless tongues, where thanks are due;  
 Fell this dread voice from lips that cannot lie,  
 Stern sentence of the Powers of Destiny.



“ I will unfold my sentence and my crime.  
 My crime—that, rapt in reverential awe,  
 I sate obedient, in the fiery prime  
 Of youth, self-govern’d, at the feet of Law ;  
 Ennobling this dull pomp, the life of kings,  
 By contemplation of diviner things.

“ My father loved injustice, and lived long ;  
 Crown’d with gray hairs he died, and full of sway.  
 I loved the good he scorn’d, and hated wrong—  
 The Gods declare my recompence to-day.  
 I look’d for life more lasting, rule more high ;  
 And when six years are measured, lo, I die !

“ Yet surely, O my people, did I deem  
 Man’s justice from the all-just Gods was given ;  
 A light that from some upper fount did beam,  
 Some better archetype, whose seat was heaven ;  
 A light that, shining from the blest abodes,  
 Did shadow somewhat of the life of Gods.

“ Mere phantoms of man’s self-tormenting heart,  
 Which on the sweets that woo it dares not feed !  
 Vain dreams, which quench our pleasures, then depart,  
 When the duped soul, self-master’d, claims its meed ;  
 When, on the strenuous just man, Heaven bestows,  
 Crown of his struggling life, an unjust close !

“ Seems it so light a thing, then, austere Powers,  
 To spurn man’s common lure, life’s pleasant things ?  
 Seems there no joy in dances crown’d with flowers,  
 Love, free to range, and regal banquetings ?  
 Bend ye on these, indeed, an unmoved eye,  
 Not Gods but ghosts, in frozen apathy ?

“ Or is it that some Force, too wise, too strong,  
Even for ourselves to conquer or beguile,  
Sweet is earth, and heaven, and men, and gods along,  
Like the broad volume of the insurgent Nile?  
And the great powers we serve, themselves may be  
Slaves of a tyrannous necessity?

“ Or in mid-heaven, perhaps, your golden cars,  
Where earthly voice climbs never, wing their flight,  
And in wild hunt, through mazy tracts of stars,  
Sweep in the sounding stillness of the night?  
Or in deaf ease, on thrones of dazzling sheen,  
Drinking deep draughts of joy, ye dwell serene?

“ Oh, wherefore cheat our youth, if thus it be,  
Of one short joy, one lust, one pleasant dream?  
Stringing vain words of powers we cannot see,  
Blind divinations of a will supreme;  
Lost labour! when the circumambient gloom  
But hides, if Gods, Gods careless of our doom?

“ The rest I give to joy. Even while I speak,  
My sand runs short; and—as yon star-shot ray,  
Hemm'd by two banks of cloud, peers pale and weak,  
Now, as the barrier closes, dies away—  
Even so do past and future intertwine,  
Blotting this six years' space, which yet is mine.

“ Six years—six little years—six drops of time!  
Yet suns shall rise, and many moons shall wane,  
And old men die, and young men pass their prime,  
And languid pleasure fade and flower again,  
And the dull Gods behold, ere these are flown,  
Revels more deep, joy keener than their own.

“ Into the silence of the groves and woods  
 I will go forth ; though something would I say—  
 Something—yet what, I know not ; for the Gods  
 The doom they pass revoke not, nor delay ;  
 And prayers, and gifts, and tears, are fruitless all,  
 And the night waxes, and the shadows fall.

“ Ye men of Egypt, ye have heard your king !  
 I go, and I return not. But the will  
 Of the great Gods is plain ; and ye must bring  
 Ill deeds, ill passions, zealous to fulfil  
 Their pleasure, to their feet ; and reap their praise,  
 The praise of Gods, rich boon ! and length of days.”

—So spake he, half in anger, half in scorn ;  
 And one loud cry of grief and of amaze  
 Broke from his sorrowing people ; so he spake,  
 And turning, left them there ; and with brief pause,  
 Girt with a throng of revellers, bent his way  
 To the cool region of the groves he loved.  
 There by the river-banks he wander'd on,  
 From palm-grove on to palm-grove, happy trees,  
 Their smooth tops shining sunward, and beneath  
 Burying their unsunn'd stems in grass and flowers ;  
 Where in one dream the feverish time of youth  
 Might fade in slumber, and the feet of joy  
 Might wander all day long and never tire.  
 Here came the king, holding high feast, at morn,  
 Rose-crown'd ; and ever, when the sun went down,  
 A hundred lamps beam'd in the tranquil gloom,  
 From tree to tree all through the twinkling grove,  
 Revealing all the tumult of the feast—  
 Flush'd guests, and golden goblets foam'd with wine ;

While the deep-burnish'd foliage overhead  
Splinter'd the silver arrows of the moon.

It may be that sometimes his wondering soul  
From the loud joyful laughter of his lips  
Might shrink half startled, like a guilty man  
Who wrestles with his dream ; as some pale shape  
Gliding half hidden through the dusky stems,  
Would thrust a hand before the lifted bowl,  
Whispering : *A little space, and thou art mine !*

It may be on that joyless feast his eye  
Dwelt with mere outward seeming ; he, within,  
Took measure of his soul, and knew its strength,  
And by that silent knowledge, day by day,  
Was calm'd, ennobled, comforted, sustain'd.  
It may be ; but not less his brow was smooth,  
And his clear laugh fled ringing through the gloom,  
And his mirth quail'd not at the mild reproof  
Sigh'd out by winter's sad tranquillity ;  
Nor, pall'd with its own fulness, ebb'd and died  
In the rich languor of long summer-days ;  
Nor wither'd when the palm-tree plumes, that roof'd  
With their mild dark his grassy banquet-hall,  
Bent to the cold winds of the showerless spring ;  
No, nor grew dark when autumn brought the clouds.

So six long years he revell'd, night and day.  
And when the mirth wax'd loudest, with dull sound  
Sometimes from the grove's centre echoes came,  
To tell his wondering people of their king ;  
In the still night, across the steaming flats,  
Mix'd with the murmur of the moving Nile.

## THE CHURCH OF BROU

## I

## The Castle

Down the Savoy valleys sounding,  
 Echoing round this castle old,  
 'Mid the distant mountain-chalets  
 Hark ! what bell for church is toll'd ?

In the bright October morning  
 Savoy's Duke had left his bride.  
 From the castle, past the drawbridge,  
 Flow'd the hunters' merry tide.

Steeds are neighing, gallants glittering ;  
 Gay, her smiling lord to greet,  
 From her mullion'd chamber-casement  
 Smiles the Duchess Marguerite.

From Vienna, by the Danube,  
 Here she came, a bride, in spring.  
 Now the autumn crisps the forest ;  
 Hunters gather, bugles ring.

Hounds are pulling, prickers swearing,  
 Horses fret, and boar-spears glance.  
 Off!—They sweep the marshy forests,  
 Westward, on the side of France.

Hark ! the game's on foot ; they scatter !—  
 Down the forest-ridings lone,  
 Furious, single horsemen gallop—  
 Hark ! a shout—a crash—a groan !

Pale and breathless, came the hunters ;  
 On the turf dead lies the boar—  
 God ! the Duke lies stretch'd beside him,  
 Senseless, weltering in his gore.

\* \* \* \*

In the dull October evening,  
 Down the leaf-strewn forest-road,  
 To the castle, past the drawbridge,  
 Came the hunters with their load.

In the hall, with sconces blazing,  
 Ladies waiting round her seat,  
 Clothed in smiles, beneath the daïs  
 Sate the Duchess Marguerite.

Hark ! below the gates unbarring !  
 Tramp of men and quick commands !  
 “—’Tis my lord come back from hunting—”  
 And the Duchess claps her hands.

Slow and tired, came the hunters—  
 Stopp’d in darkness in the court.  
 “—Ho, this way, ye laggard hunters !  
 To the hall ! What sport ? What sport ?”—

Slow they enter’d with their master ;  
 In the hall they laid him down.  
 On his coat were leaves and blood-stains,  
 On his brow an angry frown.

Dead her princely youthful husband  
 Lay before his youthful wife,  
 Bloody, ’neath the flaring sconces—  
 And the sight froze all her life.

\* \* \* \*

In Vienna, by the Danube,  
 Kings hold revel, gallants meet.  
 Gay of old amid the gayest  
 Was the Duchess Marguerite.

In Vienna, by the Danube,  
 Feast and dance her youth beguiled.  
 Till that hour she never sorrow'd ;  
 But from then she never smiled.

'Mid the Savoy mountain valleys  
 Far from town or haunt of man,  
 Stands a lonely church, unfinish'd,  
 Which the Duchess Maud began ;

Old, that Duchess stern began it,  
 In gray age, with palsied hands ;  
 But she died while it was building,  
 And the Church unfinish'd stands—

Stands as erst the builders left it,  
 When she sank into her grave ;  
 Mountain greensward paves the chancel,  
 Harebells flower in the nave

“—In my castle all is sorrow,”  
 Said the Duchess Marguerite then ;  
 “Guide me, some one, to the mountain !  
 We will build the Church again.”—

Sandall'd palmers, faring homeward,  
 Austrian knights from Syria came.  
 “—Austrian wanderers bring, O warders !  
 Homage to your Austrian dame.”—

From the gate the warders answer'd :  
 "—Gone, O knights, is she you knew !  
 Dead our Duke, and gone his Duchess ;  
 Seek her at the Church of Brou !"—

Austrian knights and much-worn palmers  
 Climb the winding mountain-way—  
 Reach the valley, where the Fabric  
 Rises higher day by day.

Stones are sawing, hammers ringing ;  
 On the work the bright sun shines,  
 In the Savoy mountain-meadows,  
 By the stream, below the pines.

On her palfrey white the Duchess  
 Sate and watch'd her working train—  
 Flemish carvers, Lombard gilders,  
 German masons, smiths from Spain.

Clad in black, on her white palfrey,  
 Her old architect beside—  
 There they found her in the mountains,  
 Morn and noon and eventide.

There she sate, and watch'd the builders,  
 Till the Church was roof'd and done.  
 Last of all, the builders rear'd her  
 In the nave a tomb of stone.

On the tomb two forms they sculptured,  
 Lifelike in the marble pale—  
 One, the Duke in helm and armour ;  
 One, the Duchess in her veil.



Round the tomb the carved stone fretwork  
 Was at Easter-tide put on.  
 Then the Duchess closed her labours ;  
 And she died at the St. John.

## II

## The Church

UPON the glistening leaden roof  
 Of the new Pile, the sunlight shines ;  
     The stream goes leaping by.  
 The hills are clothed with pines sun-proof ;  
 'Mid bright green fields, below the pines,  
     Stands the Church on high.  
 What Church is this, from men aloof?—  
 'Tis the Church of Brou.

At sunrise, from their dewy lair  
 Crossing the stream, the kine are seen  
     Round the wall to stray—  
 The churchyard wall that clips the square  
 Of open hill-sward fresh and green  
     Where last year they lay.  
 But all things now are order'd fair  
 Round the Church of Brou.

On Sundays, at the matin-chime,  
 The Alpine peasants, two and three,  
     Climb up here to pray ;  
 Burghers and dames, at summer's prime,  
 Ride out to church from Chambery,  
     Dight with mantles gay.

But else it is a lonely time  
Round the Church of Brou.

On Sundays, too, a priest doth come  
From the wall'd town beyond the pass,  
    Down the mountain-way ;  
And then you hear the organ's hum,  
You hear the white-robed priest say mass,  
    And the people pray.  
But else the woods and fields are dumb  
Round the Church of Brou.

And after church, when mass is done,  
The people to the nave repair  
    Round the tomb to stray ;  
And marvel at the Forms of stone,  
And praise the chisell'd broideries rare—  
    Then they drop away.  
The princely Pair are left alone  
In the Church of Brou.

### III

#### The Tomb

So rest, for ever rest, O princely Pair !  
In your high church, 'mid the still mountain-air,  
Where horn, and hound, and vassals, never come.  
Only the blessed Saints are smiling dumb,  
From the rich painted windows of the nave,  
On aisle, and transept, and your marble grave ;  
Where thou, young Prince ! shalt never more arise  
From the fringed mattress where thy Duchess lies,

On autumn-mornings, when the bugle sounds,  
 And ride across the drawbridge with thy hounds  
 To hunt the boar in the crisp woods till eve ;  
 And thou, O Princess ! shalt no more receive,  
 Thou and thy ladies, in the hall of state,  
 The jaded hunters with their bloody freight,  
 Coming benighted to the castle-gate.

So sleep, for ever sleep, O marble Pair !  
 Or, if ye wake, let it be then, when fair  
 On the carved western front a flood of light  
 Streams from the setting sun, and colours bright  
 Prophets, transfigured Saints, and Martyrs brave,  
 In the vast western window of the nave ;  
 And on the pavement round the Tomb there glints  
 A chequer-work of glowing sapphire-tints,  
 And amethyst, and ruby—then unclose  
 Your eyelids on the stone where ye repose,  
 And from your broider'd pillows lift your heads,  
 And rise upon your cold white marble beds ;  
 And, looking down on the warm rosy tints,  
 Which chequer, at your feet, the illumined flints,  
 Say : *What is this ? we are in bliss—forgiven—  
 Behold the pavement of the courts of Heaven !*  
 Or let it be on autumn nights, when rain  
 Doth rustlingly above your heads complain  
 On the smooth leaden roof, and on the walls  
 Shedding her pensive light at intervals  
 The moon through the clere-story windows shines,  
 And the wind washes through the mountain-pines.  
 Then, gazing up 'mid the dim pillars high,  
 The foliated marble forest where ye lie,  
*Hush, ye will say, it is eternity !  
 This is the glimmering verge of Heaven, and these*

*The columns of the heavenly palaces !*  
 And, in the sweeping of the wind, your ear  
 The passage of the Angels' wings will hear,  
 And on the lichen-crustled leads above  
 The rustle of the eternal rain of love.

### A MODERN SAPPHO

THEY are gone—all is still ! Foolish heart, dost thou quiver ?  
 Nothing stirs on the lawn but the quick lilac-shade.  
 Far up shines the house, and beneath flows the river—  
 Here lean, my head, on this cold balustrade !

Ere he come—ere the boat by the shining-branch'd border  
 Of dark elms shoot round, dropping down the proud stream,  
 Let me pause, let me strive, in myself make some order,  
 Ere their boat-music sound, ere their broider'd flags gleam.

Last night we stood earnestly talking together ;  
 She enter'd—that moment his eyes turn'd from me !  
 Fasten'd on her dark hair, and her wreath of white heather—  
 As yesterday was, so to-morrow will be.

Their love, let me know, must grow strong and yet stronger,  
 Their passion burn more, ere it ceases to burn.  
 They must love—while they must ! but the hearts that love  
 longer  
 Are rare—ah ! most loves but flow once, and return.

I shall suffer—but they will outlive their affection ,  
 I shall weep—but their love will be cooling ; and he,  
 As he drifts to fatigue, discontent, and dejection,  
 Will be brought, thou poor heart, how much nearer to thee !

For cold is his eye to mere beauty, who, breaking  
 The strong band which passion around him hath furl'd,  
 Disenchanted by habit, and newly awaking,  
 Looks languidly round on a gloom-buried world.

Through that gloom he will see but a shadow appearing,  
 Perceive but a voice as I come to his side—  
 But deeper their voice grows, and nobler their bearing,  
 Whose youth in the fires of anguish hath died.

So, to wait!—But what notes down the wind, hark! are  
 driving?

'Tis he! 'tis their flag, shooting round by the trees!  
 —Let my turn, if it *will* come, be swift in arriving!  
 Ah! hope cannot long lighten torments like these.

Hast thou yet dealt him, O life, thy full measure?  
 World, have thy children yet bow'd at his knee?  
 Hast thou with myrtle-leaf crown'd him, O pleasure?  
 —Crown, crown him quickly, and leave him for me!

## REQUIESCAT

STREW on her roses, roses,  
 And never a spray of yew!  
 In quiet she reposes;  
 Ah, would that I did too!

Her mirth the world required;  
 She bathed it in smiles of glee.  
 But her heart was tired, tired,  
 And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,  
    In mazes of heat and sound.  
But for peace her soul was yearning,  
    And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample spirit,  
    It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.  
To-night it doth inherit  
    The vasty hall of death.

### YOUTH AND CALM

'Tis death! and peace, indeed, is here,  
And ease from shame, and rest from fear.  
There's nothing can disarm now  
The smoothness of that limpid brow.  
But is a calm like this, in truth,  
The crowning end of life and youth,  
And when this boon rewards the dead,  
Are all debts paid, has all been said?  
And is the heart of youth so light,  
Its step so firm, its eyes so bright,  
Because on its hot brow there blows  
A wind of promise and repose  
From the far grave, to which it goes;  
Because it hath the hope to come,  
One day, to harbour in the tomb?  
Ah no, the bliss youth dreams is one  
For daylight, for the cheerful sun,  
For feeling nerves and living breath—  
Youth dreams a bliss on this side death.

It dreams a rest, if not more deep,  
 More grateful than this marble sleep ;  
 It hears a voice within it tell :  
*Calm's not life's crown, though calm is well.*  
 'Tis all perhaps which man acquires,  
 But 'tis not what our youth desires.

## A MEMORY-PICTURE

LAUGH, my friends, and without blame  
 Lightly quit what lightly came ;  
 Rich to-morrow as to-day,  
 Spend as madly as you may !  
 I, with little land to stir,  
 Am the exacter labourer.

Ere the parting hour go by,  
 Quick, thy tablets, Memory !

Once<sup>3</sup>I said : “ A face is gone  
 If too hotly mused upon ;  
 And our best impressions are  
 Those that do themselves repair.”  
 Many a face I so let flee,  
 Ah ! is faded utterly.

Ere the parting hour go by,  
 Quick, thy tablets, Memory !

Marguerite says : “ As last year went,  
 So the coming year 'll be spent ;  
 Some day next year, I shall be,  
 Entering heedless, kiss'd by thee.”  
 Ah, I hope !—yet, once away,  
 What may chain us, who can say ?

Ere the parting hour go by,  
Quick, thy tablets, Memory !

Paint that lilac kerchief, bound  
Her soft face, her hair around ;  
Tied under the archest chin  
Mockery ever ambush'd in.  
Let the fluttering fringes streak  
All her pale, sweet-rounded cheek.

Ere the parting hour go by,  
Quick, thy tablets, Memory !

Paint that figure's pliant grace  
As she tow'rd me lean'd her face,  
Half refused and half resign'd,  
Murmuring : " Art thou still unkind ?"  
Many a broken promise then  
Was new made—to break again.

Ere the parting hour go by,  
Quick, thy tablets, Memory !

Paint those eyes, so blue, so kind,  
Eager tell-tales of her mind ;  
Paint, with their impetuous stress  
Of inquiring tenderness,  
Those frank eyes, where deep I see  
An angelic gravity.

Ere the parting hour go by,  
Quick, thy tablets, Memory !

What, my friends, these feeble lines  
Show, you say, my love declines ?  
To paint ill as I have done,  
Proves forgetfulness begun ?



Time's gay minions, pleased you see,  
 Time, your master, governs me ;  
 Pleased, you mock the fruitless cry :  
 "Quick, thy tablets, Memory !"

Ah, too true ! Time's current strong  
 Leaves us fixt to nothing long.  
 Yet, if little stays with man,  
 Ah, retain we all we can !  
 If the clear impression dies,  
 Ah, the dim remembrance prize !  
 Ere the parting hour go by,  
 Quick, thy tablets, Memory !

## A DREAM

WAS it a dream ? We sail'd, I thought we sail'd,  
 Martin and I, down a green Alpine stream,  
 Border'd, each bank, with pines ; the morning sun,  
 On the wet umbrage of their glossy tops,  
 On the red pinings of their forest-floor,  
 Drew a warm scent abroad ; behind the pines  
 The mountain-skirts, with all their sylvan change  
 Of bright-leaf'd chestnuts and moss'd walnut-trees  
 And the frail scarlet-berried ash, began.  
 Swiss chalets glitter'd on the dewy slopes,  
 And from some swarded shelf, high up, there came  
 Notes of wild pastoral music—over all  
 Ranged, diamond-bright, the eternal wall of snow.  
 Upon the mossy rocks at the stream's edge,  
 Back'd by the pines, a plank-built cottage stood,  
 Bright in the sun ; the climbing gourd-plant's leaves  
 Muffled its walls, and on the stone-strewn roof

Lay the warm golden gourds ; golden, within,  
 Under the eaves, peer'd rows of Indian corn.  
 We shot beneath the cottage with the stream.  
 On the brown, rude-carved balcony, two forms  
 Came forth—Olivia's, Marguerite ! and thine.  
 Clad were they both in white, flowers in their breast ;  
 Straw hats bedeck'd their heads, with ribbons blue,  
 Which danced, and on their shoulders, fluttering, play'd.  
 They saw us, they conferr'd ; their bosoms heaved,  
 And more than mortal impulse fill'd their eyes.  
 Their lips movéd ; their white arms, waved eagerly,  
 Flash'd once, like falling streams ; we rose, we gazéd.  
 One moment, on the rapid's top, our boat  
 Hung poised—and then the darting river of Life  
 (Such now, methought, it was), the river of Life,  
 Loud thundering, bore us by ; swift, swift it foam'd,  
 Black under cliffs it raced, round headlands shone.  
 Soon the plank'd cottage by the sun-warm'd pines  
 Faded—the moss—the rocks ; us burning plains,  
 Bristled with cities, us the sea received.

### THE NEW SIRENS

IN the cedarn shadow sleeping,  
 Where cool grass and fragrant glooms  
 Forth at noon had lured me, creeping  
 From your darken'd palace rooms—  
 I, who in your train at morning  
 Stroll'd and sang with joyful mind,  
 Heard, in slumber, sounds of warning ;  
 Heard the hoarse boughs labour in the wind.

Who are they, O pensive Graces,  
—For I dream'd they wore your forms—  
Who on shores and sea-wash'd places  
Scoop the shelves and fret the storms?  
Who, when ships are that way tending,  
Troop across the flushing sands,  
To all reefs and narrows wending,  
With blown tresses, and with beckoning hands?

Yet I see, the howling levels  
Of the deep are not your lair;  
And your tragic-vaunted revels  
Are less lonely than they were.  
Like those Kings with treasure steering  
From the jewell'd lands of dawn,  
Troops, with gold and gifts, appearing,  
Stream all day through your enchanted lawn.

And we too, from upland valleys,  
Where some Muse with half-curved frown  
Leans her ear to your mad sallies  
Which the charm'd winds never drown;  
By faint music guided, ranging  
The scared glens, we wander'd on,  
Left our awful laurels hanging,  
And came heap'd with myrtles to your throne.

From the dragon-warder'd fountains  
Where the springs of knowledge are,  
From the watchers on the mountains,  
And the bright and morning star;  
We are exiles, we are falling,  
We have lost them at your call—

O ye false ones, at your calling  
Seeking ceiled chambers and a palace-hall !

Are the accents of your luring  
More melodious than of yore ?  
Are those frail forms more enduring  
Than the charms Ulysses bore ?  
That we sought you with rejoicings,  
Till at evening we descry  
At a pause of Siren voicings  
These vext branches and this howling sky ? . . .

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Oh, your pardon ! The uncouthness  
Of that primal age is gone,  
And the skin of dazzling smoothness  
Screens not now a heart of stone.  
Love has flush'd those cruel faces ;  
And those slacken'd arms forgo  
The delight of death-embraces,  
And yon whitening bone-mounds do not grow.

“ Ah,” you say ; “ the large appearance  
Of man's labour is but vain,  
And we plead as staunch adherence  
Due to pleasure as to pain.”  
Pointing to earth's careworn creatures,  
“ Come,” you murmur with a sigh :  
“ Ah ! we own diviner features,  
Loftier bearing, and a prouder eye.

“ Come,” you say, “ the hours were dreary ;  
Dull did life in torpor fade ;

Time is lame, and we grew weary  
 In the slumbrous cedarn shade.  
 Round our hearts with long caresses,  
 With low sighings, Silence stole,  
 And her load of steaming tresses  
 Fell, like Ossa, on the climbing soul.

“Come,” you say, “the soul is fainting  
 Till she search and learn her own,  
 And the wisdom of man’s painting  
 Leaves her riddle half unknown.  
 Come,” you say, “the brain is seeking,  
 While the sovran heart is dead ;  
 Yet this glean’d, when Gods were speaking,  
 Rarer secrets than the toiling head.

“Come,” you say, “opinion trembles,  
 Judgment shifts, convictions go ;  
 Life dries up, the heart dissembles—  
 Only, what we feel, we know.  
 Hath your wisdom felt emotions ?  
 Will it weep our burning tears ?  
 Hath it drunk of our love-potions  
 Crowning moments with the wealth of years ?”

—I am dumb. Alas, too soon all  
 Man’s grave reasons disappear !  
 Yet, I think, at God’s tribunal  
 Some large answer you shall hear.  
 But, for me, my thoughts are straying  
 Where at sunrise, through your vines,  
 On these lawns I saw you playing,  
 Hanging garlands on your odorous pines ;

When your showering locks enwound you,  
 And your heavenly eyes shone through ;  
 When the pine-boughs yielded round you,  
 And your brows were starr'd with dew ;  
 And immortal forms, to meet you,  
 Down the statued alleys came,  
 And through golden horns, to greet you,  
 Blew such music as a God may frame.

Yes, I muse ! And if the dawning  
 Into daylight never grew,  
 If the glistering wings of morning  
 On the dry noon shook their dew,  
 If the fits of joy were longer,  
 Or the day were sooner done,  
 Or, perhaps, if hope were stronger,  
 No weak nursling of an earthly sun . . .  
 Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens,  
 Dusk the hall with yew !

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For a bound was set to meetings,  
 And the sombre day dragg'd on ;  
 And the burst of joyful greetings,  
 And the joyful dawn, were gone.  
 For the eye grows fill'd with gazing,  
 And on raptures follow calms ;  
 And those warm locks men were praising,  
 Droop'd, unbraided, on your listless arms.

Storms unsmooth'd your folded valleys,  
 And made all your cedars frown ;  
 Leaves were whirling in the alleys  
 Which your lovers wander'd down.

—Sitting cheerless in your bowers,  
The hands propping the sunk head,  
Still they gall you, the long hours,  
And the hungry thought, that must be fed !

Is the pleasure that is tasted  
Patient of a long review ?  
Will the fire joy hath wasted,  
Mused on, warm the heart anew ?  
—Or, are those old thoughts returning,  
Guests the dull sense never knew,  
Stars, set deep, yet inly burning,  
Germs, your untrimm'd passion overgrew ?

Once, like us, you took your station  
Watchers for a purer fire ;  
But you droop'd in expectation,  
And you wearied in desire.  
When the first rose flush was steeping  
All the frore peak's awful crown,  
Shepherds say, they found you sleeping  
In some windless valley, farther down.

Then you wept, and slowly raising  
Your dozed eyelids, sought again,  
Half in doubt, they say, and gazing  
Sadly back, the seats of men ;—  
Snatch'd a turbid inspiration  
From some transient earthly sun,  
And proclaim'd your vain ovation  
For those mimic raptures you had won. . .

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With a sad, majestic motion,  
 With a stately, slow surprise,  
 From their earthward-bound devotion  
 Lifting up your languid eyes—  
 Would you freeze my too loud boldness,  
 Dumbly smiling as you go,  
 One faint frown of distant coldness  
 Flitting fast across each marble brow?

Do I brighten at your sorrow,  
 O sweet Pleaders?—doth my lot  
 Find assurance in to-morrow  
 Of one joy, which you have not?  
 O, speak once, and shame my sadness!  
 Let this sobbing, Phrygian strain,  
 Mock'd and baffled by your gladness,  
 Mar the music of your feasts in vain!

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Scent, and song, and light, and flowers!  
 Gust on gust, the harsh winds blow—  
 Come, bind up those ringlet showers!  
 Roses for that dreaming brow!  
 Come, once more that ancient lightness,  
 Glancing feet, and eager eyes!  
 Let your broad lamps flash the brightness  
 Which the sorrow-stricken day denies!

Through black depths of serried shadows,  
 Up cold aisles of buried glade;  
 In the midst of river-meadows  
 Where the looming kine are laid;  
 From your dazzled windows streaming,  
 From your humming festal room,



Deep and far, a broken gleaming  
Reels and shivers on the ruffled gloom.

Where I stand, the grass is glowing ;  
Doubtless you are passing fair !  
But I hear the north wind blowing,  
And I feel the cold night-air.  
Can I look on your sweet faces,  
And your proud heads backward thrown,  
From this dusk of leaf-strewn places  
With the dumb woods and the night alone ?

Yet, indeed, this flux of guesses—  
Mad delight, and frozen calms—  
Mirth to-day and vine-bound tresses,  
And to-morrow—folded palms ;  
Is this all ? this balanced measure ?  
Could life run no happier way ?  
Joyous, at the height of pleasure,  
Passive at the nadir of dismay ?

But, indeed, this proud possession,  
This far-reaching, magic chain,  
Linking in a mad succession  
Fits of joy and fits of pain—  
Have you seen it at the closing ?  
Have you track'd its clouded ways ?  
Can your eyes, while fools are dozing,  
Drop, with mine, adown life's latter days ?

When a dreary dawn is wading  
Through this waste of sunless greens,  
When the flushing hues are fading  
On the peerless cheek of queens ;

When the mean shall no more sorrow,  
 And the proudest no more smile ;  
 As old age, youth's fatal morrow,  
 Spreads its cold light wider all that while ?

Then, when change itself is over,  
 When the slow tide sets one way,  
 Shall you find the radiant lover,  
 Even by moments, of to-day ?  
 The eye wanders, faith is failing—  
 O, loose hands, and let it be !  
 Proudly, like a king bewailing,  
 O, let fall one tear, and set us free !

All true speech and large avowal  
 Which the jealous soul concedes ;  
 All man's heart which brooks bestowal,  
 All frank faith which passion breeds—  
 These we had, and we gave truly ;  
 Doubt not, what we had, we gave !  
 False we were not, nor unruly ;  
 Lodgers in the forest and the cave.

Long we wander'd with you, feeding  
 Our rapt souls on your replies,  
 In a wistful silence reading  
 All the meaning of your eyes.  
 By moss-border'd statues sitting,  
 By well-heads, in summer days.  
 But we turn, our eyes are flitting—  
 See, the white east, and the morning rays !

And you too, O worshipp'd Graces,  
 Sylvan Gods of this fair shade !

Is there doubt on divine faces ?  
 Are the blessed Gods dismay'd ?  
 Can men worship the wan features,  
 The sunk eyes, the wailing tone,  
 Of unsphered, discrowned creatures,  
 Souls as little godlike as their own ?

Come, loose hands ! The winged fleetness  
 Of immortal feet is gone ;  
 And your scents have shed their sweetness,  
 And your flowers are overblown.  
 And your jewell'd gauds surrender  
 Half their glories to the day ;  
 Freely did they flash their splendour,  
 Freely gave it—but it dies away.

In the pines the thrush is waking—  
 Lo, yon orient hill in flames !  
 Scores of true love knots are breaking  
 At divorce which it proclaims.  
 When the lamps are paled at morning,  
 Heart quits heart and hand quits hand.  
 Cold in that unlovely dawning,  
 Loveless, rayless, joyless you shall stand !

Pluck no more red roses, maidens,  
 Leave the lilies in their dew—  
 Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens,  
 Dusk, oh, dusk the hall with yew !  
 —Shall I seek, that I may scorn her,  
 Her I loved at eventide ?  
 Shall I ask, what faded mourner  
 Stands, at daybreak, weeping by my side ?  
 Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens !  
 Dusk the hall with yew !

## THE VOICE

As the kindling glances,  
 Queen-like and clear,  
 Which the bright moon lances  
 From her tranquil sphere  
 At the sleepless waters  
 Of a lonely mere,  
 On the wild whirling waves, mournfully, mournfully,  
 Shiver and die

As the tears of sorrow  
 Mothers have shed—  
 Prayers that to-morrow  
 Shall in vain be sped  
 When the flower they flow for  
 Lies frozen and dead—  
 Fall on the throbbing brow, fall on the burning breast,  
 Bringing no rest.

Like bright waves that fall  
 With a lifelike motion  
 On the lifeless margin of the sparkling Ocean ;  
 A wild rose climbing up a mouldering wall—  
 A gush of sunbeams through a ruin'd hall—  
 Strains of glad music at a funeral—  
 So sad, and with so wild a start  
 To this deep-sober'd heart,  
 So anxiously and painfully,  
 So drearily and doubtfully,  
 And oh, with such intolerable change  
 Of thought, such contrast strange,

O unforgotten voice, thy accents come,  
 Like wanderers from the world's extremity,  
     Unto their ancient home !

In vain, all, all in vain,  
 They beat upon mine ear again,  
 Those melancholy tones so sweet and still.  
 Those lute-like tones which in the bygone year—  
     Did steal into mine ear—  
 Blew such a thrilling summons to my will,  
     Yet could not shake it ;  
 Made my tost heart its very life-blood spill,  
     Yet could not break it.

## YOUTH'S AGITATIONS

WHEN I shall be divorced, some ten years hence,  
 From this poor present self which I am now ;  
 When youth has done its tedious vain expense  
 Of passions that for ever ebb and flow ;

Shall I not joy youth's heats are left behind,  
 And breathe more happy in an even clime ?—  
 Ah no, for then I shall begin to find  
 A thousand virtues in this hated time !

Then I shall wish its agitations back,  
 And all its thwarting currents of desire ;  
 Then I shall praise the heat which then I lack,  
 And call this hurrying fever, generous fire ;

And sigh that one thing only has been lent  
 To youth and age in common—discontent.

## THE WORLD'S TRIUMPHS

So far as I conceive the world's rebuke  
 To him address'd who would recast her new,  
 Not from herself her fame of strength she took,  
 But from their weakness who would work her rue.

"Behold," she cries, "so many rages lull'd,  
 So many fiery spirits quite cool'd down ;  
 Look how so many valours, long undull'd,  
 After short commerce with me, fear my frown !

"Thou too, when thou against my crimes wouldst cry,  
 Let thy foreboded homage check thy tongue!"—  
 The world speaks well ; yet might her foe reply :  
 "Are wills so weak?—then let not mine wait long !

"Hast thou so rare a poison?—let me be  
 Keener to slay thee, lest thou poison me !"

STAGIRIUS<sup>3</sup>

THOU, who dost dwell alone—  
 Thou, who dost know thine own—  
 Thou, to whom all are known  
 From the cradle to the grave—  
     Save, oh ! save.  
 From the world's temptations,  
     From tribulations,  
 From that fierce anguish  
 Wherein we languish,

From that torpor deep  
 Wherein we lie asleep,  
 Heavy as death, cold as the grave,  
 Save, oh ! save.

When the soul, growing clearer,  
 Sees God no nearer ;  
 When the soul, mounting higher,  
 To God comes no nigher ;  
 But the arch-fiend Pride  
 Mounts at her side,  
 Foiling her high emprise,  
 Sealing her eagle eyes,  
 And, when she fain would soar,  
 Makes idols to adore,  
 Changing the pure emotion  
 Of her high devotion,  
 To a skin-deep sense  
 Of her own eloquence ;  
 Strong to deceive, strong to enslave—  
 Save, oh ! save.

From the ingrain'd fashion  
 Of this earthly nature  
 That mars thy creature ;  
 From grief that is but passion,  
 From mirth that is but feigning,  
 From tears that bring no healing,  
 From wild and weak complaining,  
 Thine old strength revealing,  
 Save, oh ! save.

From doubt, where all is double ;  
 Where wise men are not strong,  
 Where comfort turns to trouble,

Where just men suffer wrong ;  
 Where sorrow treads on joy,  
 Where sweet things soonest cloy,  
 Where faiths are built on dust,  
 Where love is half mistrust,  
 Hungry, and barren, and sharp as the sea—  
     Oh ! set us free.  
 O let the false dream fly,  
 Where our sick souls do lie  
     Tossing continually !  
     O where thy voice doth come  
         Let all doubts be dumb,  
         Let all words be mild,  
         All strifes be reconciled,  
         All pains beguiled !  
         Light bring no blindness,  
         Love no unkindness,  
         Knowledge no ruin,  
         Fear no undoing !  
         From the cradle to the grave,  
             Save, oh ! save.

### HUMAN LIFE

WHAT mortal, when he saw,  
 Life's voyage done, his heavenly Friend,  
 Could ever yet dare tell him fearlessly :  
 " I have kept unfringed my nature's law ;  
 The inly-written chart thou gavest me,  
 To guide me, I have steer'd by to the end " ?  
  
 Ah ! let us make no claim,  
 On life's incognisable sea,



To too exact a steering of our way ;  
 Let us not fret and fear to miss our aim,  
 If some fair coast have lured us to make stay,  
 Or some friend hail'd us to keep company.

Ay ! we would each fain drive  
 At random, and not steer by rule.  
 Weakness ! and worse, weakness bestow'd in vain  
 Winds from our side the unsuiting consort rive,  
 We rush by coasts where we had lief remain ;  
 Man cannot, though he would, live chance's fool.

No ! as the foaming swath  
 Of torn-up water, on the main,  
 Falls heavily away with long-drawn roar  
 On either side the black deep-furrow'd path  
 Cut by an onward-labouring vessel's prore,  
 And never touches the ship-side again ;

Even so we leave behind,  
 As, charter'd by some unknown Powers,  
 We stem across the sea of life by night,  
 The joys which were not for our use design'd ;—  
 The friends to whom we had no natural right,  
 The homes that were not destined to be ours.

## TO A GIPSY CHILD BY THE SEA-SHORE

DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN

Who taught this pleading to unpractised eyes ?  
 Who hid such import in an infant's gloom ?  
 Who lent thee, child, this meditative guise ?  
 Who mass'd, round that slight brow, these clouds of doom ?

Lo ! sails that gleam a moment and are gone ;  
 The swinging waters, and the cluster'd pier.  
 Not idly Earth and Ocean labour on,  
 Nor idly do these sea-birds hover near.

But thou, whom superfluity of joy  
 Wafts not from thine own thoughts, nor longings vain,  
 Nor weariness, the full-fed soul's annoy—  
 Remaining in thy hunger and thy pain ;

Thou, drugging pain by patience ; half averse  
 From thine own mother's breast, that knows not thee ;  
 With eyes which sought thine eyes thou didst converse,  
 And that soul-searching vision fell on me.

Glooms that go deep as thine I have not known :  
 Moods of fantastic sadness, nothing worth.  
 Thy sorrow and thy calmness are thine own :  
 Glooms that enhance and glorify this earth.

What mood wears like complexion to thy woe ?  
 His, who in mountain glens, at noon of day,  
 Sits rapt, and hears the battle break below ?  
 —Ah ! thine was not the shelter, but the fray

Some exile's, mindful how the past was glad ?  
 Some angel's, in an alien planet born ?  
 —No exile's dream was ever half so sad,  
 Nor any angel's sorrow so forlorn.

Is the calm thine of stoic souls, who weigh  
 Life well, and find it wanting, nor deplore ;  
 But in disdainful silence turn away,  
 Stand mute, self-centred, stern, and dream no more ?

Or do I wait, to hear some gray-hair'd king  
Unravel all his many-colour'd lore ;  
Whose mind hath known all arts of governing,  
Mused much, loved life a little, loathed it more ?

Down the pale cheek long lines of shadow slope,  
Which years, and curious thought, and suffering give.  
—Thou hast foreknown the vanity of hope,  
Foreseen thy harvest—yet proceed'st to live.

O meek anticipant of that sure pain  
Whose sureness gray-hair'd scholars hardly learn !  
What wonder shall time breed, to swell thy strain ?  
What heavens, what earth, what sun shalt thou discern ?

Ere the long night, whose stillness brooks no star,  
Match that funereal aspect with her pall,  
I think, thou wilt have fathom'd life too far,  
Have known too much——or else forgotten all.

The Guide of our dark steps a triple veil  
Betwixt our senses and our sorrow keeps ;  
Hath sown with cloudless passages the tale  
Of grief, and eased us with a thousand sleeps.

Ah ! not the nectarous poppy lovers use,  
Not daily labour's dull, Lethæan spring,  
Oblivion in lost angels can infuse  
Of the soil'd glory, and the trailing wing.

And though thou glean, what strenuous gleaners may,  
In the throng'd fields where winning comes by strife ;  
And though the just sun gild, as mortals pray,  
Some reaches of thy storm-vext stream of life ;

Though that blank sunshine blind thee ; though the cloud  
 That sever'd the world's march and thine, be gone ;  
 Though ease dulls grace, and Wisdom be too proud  
 To halve a lodging that was all her own—

Once, ere the day decline, thou shalt discern,  
 Oh once, ere night, in thy success, thy chain !  
 Ere the long evening close, thou shalt return,  
 And wear this majesty of grief again.

## A QUESTION

TO FAUSTA

Joy comes and goes, hope ebbs and flows  
     Like the wave ;  
 Change doth unknit the tranquil strength of men.  
     Love lends life a little grace,  
     A few sad smiles ; and then,  
     Both are laid in one cold place,  
     In the grave.

Dreams dawn and fly, friends smile and die  
     Like spring flowers ;  
 Our vaunted life is one long funeral.  
     Men dig graves with bitter tears  
     For their dead hopes ; and all,  
     Mazed with doubts and sick with fears,  
     Count the hours.

We count the hours ! These dreams of ours,  
     False and hollow,  
 Do we go hence and find they are not dead ?

Joys we dimly apprehend,  
 Faces that smiled and fled,  
 Hopes born here, and born to end,  
 Shall we follow?

## IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS

IF, in the silent mind of One all-pure,  
 At first imagined lay  
 The sacred world; and by procession sure  
 From those still deeps, in form and colour drest,  
 Seasons alternating, and night and day,  
 The long-mused thought to north, south, east, and west,  
 Took then its all-seen way;

O waking on a world which thus-wise springs!  
 Whether it needs thee count  
 Betwixt thy waking and the birth of things  
 Ages or hours—O waking on life's stream!  
 By lonely pureness to the all-pure fount  
 (Only by this thou canst) the colour'd dream  
 Of life remount!

Thin, thin the pleasant human noises grow,  
 And faint the city gleams;  
 Rare the lone pastoral huts—marvel not thou!  
 The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,  
 But to the stars, and the cold lunar beams;  
 Alone the sun arises, and alone  
 Spring the great streams.

But, if the wild unfather'd mass no birth  
 In divine seats hath known;

In the blank, echoing solitude if Earth,  
 Rocking her obscure body to and fro,  
 Ceases not from all time to heave and groan,  
 Unfruitful oft, and at her happiest throe  
     Forms, what she forms, alone ;

O seeming sole to awake, thy sun-bathed head  
     Piercing the solemn cloud  
 Round thy still dreaming brother-world outspread !  
 O man, whom Earth, thy long-vext mother, bare  
 Not without joy—so radiant, so endow'd  
 (Such happy issue crown'd her painful care)—  
     Be not too proud !

Oh when most self-exalted most alone,  
     Chief dreamer, own thy dream !  
 Thy brother-world stirs at thy feet unknown,  
 Who hath a monarch's hath no brother's part ;  
 Yet doth thine inmost soul with yearning teem.  
 —Oh, what a spasm shakes the dreamer's heart !  
     “ *I, too, but seem.*”

## THE WORLD AND THE QUIETIST

### TO CRITIAS

“ WHY, when the world's great mind  
 Hath finally inclined,  
 Why,” you say, Critias, “ be debating still ?  
 Why, with these mournful rhymes  
 Learn'd in more languid climes,  
 Blame our activity  
 Who, with such passionate will,  
 Are what we mean to be ?

Critias, long since, I know  
 (For Fate decreed it so),  
 Long since the world hath set its heart to live ;  
 Long since, with credulous zeal  
     It turns life's mighty wheel,  
 Still doth for labourers send  
     Who still their labour give,  
 And still expects an end.

Yet, as the wheel flies round,  
 With no ungrateful sound  
 Do adverse voices fall on the world's ear.  
 Deafen'd by his own stir  
 The rugged labourer  
 Caught not till then a sense  
 So glowing and so near  
     Of his omnipotence.

So, when the feast grew loud  
 In Susa's palace proud,  
 A white-robed slave stole to the Great King's side.  
 He spake—the Great King heard ;  
 Felt the slow-rolling word  
 Swell his attentive soul ;  
 Breathed deeply as it died,  
     And drain'd his mighty bowl.

HORATIAN ECHO<sup>4</sup>

(TO AN AMBITIOUS FRIEND)

OMIT, omit, my simple friend,  
 Still to enquire how parties tend,

Or what we fix with foreign powers.  
If France and we are really friends,  
And what the Russian Czar intends,  
    Is no concern of ours.

Us not the daily quickening race  
Of the invading populace  
Shall draw to swell that shouldering herd.  
Mourn will we not your closing hour,  
Ye imbeciles in present power,  
    Doom'd, pompous, and absurd !

And let us bear, that they debate  
Of all the engine-work of state,  
Of commerce, laws, and policy,  
The secrets of the world's machine,  
And what the rights of man may mean,  
    With readier tongue than we.

Only, that with no finer art  
They cloak the troubles of the heart  
With pleasant smile, let us take care ;  
Nor with a lighter hand dispose  
Fresh garlands of this dewy rose,  
    To crown Eugenia's hair.

Of little threads our life is spun,  
And he spins ill, who misses one.  
But is thy fair Eugenia cold ?  
Yet Helen had an equal grace,  
And Juliet's was as fair a face,  
    And now their years are told.

The day approaches, when we must  
Be crumbling bones and windy dust :



And scorn us as our mistress may,  
 Her beauty will no better be  
 Than the poor face she slights in thee,  
 When dawns that day, that day.

## THE SECOND BEST

MODERATE tasks and moderate leisure,  
 Quiet living, strict-kept measure  
 Both in suffering and in pleasure—  
 'Tis for this thy nature yearns.

But so many books thou readest,  
 But so many schemes thou breedest,  
 But so many wishes feedest,  
 That thy poor head almost turns.

And (the world's so madly jangled,  
 Human things so fast entangled)  
 Nature's wish must now be strangled  
 For that best which she discerns.

So it *must* be ! yet, while leading  
 A strain'd life, while overfeeding,  
 Like the rest, his wit with reading,  
 No small profit that man earns,

Who through all he meets can steer him,  
 Can reject what cannot clear him,  
 Cling to what can truly cheer him ;  
 Who each day more surely learns

That an impulse, from the distance  
 Of his deepest, best existence,  
 To the words, " Hope, Light, Persistence,"  
 Strongly sets and truly burns.

## CONSOLATION

MIST clogs the sunshine.  
Smoky dwarf houses  
Hem me round everywhere ;  
A vague dejection  
Weighs down my soul.

Yet, while I languish,  
Everywhere countless  
Prospects unroll themselves,  
And countless beings  
Pass countless moods.

Far hence, in Asia,  
On the smooth convent-roofs,  
On the gilt terraces,  
Of holy Lassa,  
Bright shines the sun.

Grey time-worn marbles  
Hold the pure Muses ;  
In their cool gallery,  
By yellow Tiber,  
They still look fair.

Strange unloved uproar \*  
Shrills round their portal ;  
Yet not on Helicon  
Kept they more cloudless  
Their noble calm.

Through sun-proof alleys  
In a lone, sand-hemm'd

\* Written during the siege of Rome by the French, 1849.

City of Africa,  
A blind, led beggar,  
Age-bow'd, asks alms.

No bolder robber  
Erst abode ambush'd  
Deep in the sandy waste ;  
No clearer eyesight  
Spied prey afar.

Saharan sand-winds  
Sear'd his keen eyeballs ;  
Spent is the spoil he won.  
For him the present  
Holds only pain.

Two young, fair lovers,  
Where the warm June-wind,  
Fresh from the summer fields  
Plays fondly round them,  
Stand, tranced in joy.

With sweet, join'd voices,  
And with eyes brimming :  
“ Ah,” they cry, “ Destiny,  
Prolong the present !  
Time, stand still here !”

The prompt stern Goddess  
Shakes her head, frowning ;  
Time gives his hour-glass  
Its due reversal ;  
Their hour is gone.

With weak indulgence  
Did the just Goddess

Lengthen their happiness,  
 She lengthen'd also  
 Distress elsewhere.

The hour, whose happy  
 Unalloy'd moments  
 I would eternalise,  
 Ten thousand mourners  
 Well pleased see end.

The bleak, stern hour,  
 Whose severe moments  
 I would annihilate,  
 Is pass'd by others  
 In warmth, light, joy.

Time, so complain'd of,  
 Who to no one man  
 Shows partiality,  
 Brings round to all men  
 Some undimm'd hours.

## RESIGNATION

TO FAUSTA

*To die be given us, or attain !  
 Fierce work it were, to do again.*  
 So pilgrims, bound for Mecca, pray'd  
 At burning noon ; so warriors said,  
 Scarf'd with the cross, who watch'd the miles  
 Of dust which wreathed their struggling files  
 Down Lydian mountains ; so, when snows

Round Alpine summits, eddying, rose,  
 The Goth, bound Rome-wards ; so the Hun,  
 Crouch'd on his saddle, while the sun  
 Went lurid down o'er flooded plains  
 Through which the groaning Danube strains  
 To the drear Euxine ;—so pray all,  
 Whom labours, self-ordain'd, enthrall ;  
 Because they to themselves propose  
 On this side the all-common close  
 A goal which, gain'd, may give repose.  
 So pray they ; and to stand again  
 Where they stood once, to them were pain ;  
 Pain to thread back and to renew  
 Past straits, and currents long steer'd through.

But milder natures, and more free—  
 Whom an unblamed serenity  
 Hath freed from passions, and the state  
 Of struggle these necessitate ;  
 Whom schooling of the stubborn mind  
 Hath made, or birth hath found, resign'd—  
 These mourn not, that their goings pay  
 Obedience to the passing day.  
 These claim not every laughing Hour  
 For handmaid to their striding power ;  
 Each in her turn, with torch uprear'd,  
 To await their march ; and when appear'd,  
 Through the cold gloom, with measured race,  
 To usher for a destined space  
 (Her own sweet errands all forgone)  
 The too imperious traveller on.  
 These, Fausta, ask not this ; nor thou,  
 Time's chafing prisoner, ask it now !

We left, just ten years since, you say,  
That wayside inn we left to-day.<sup>5</sup>  
Our jovial host, as forth we fare,  
Shouts greeting from his easy chair.  
High on a bank our leader stands,  
Reviews and ranks his motley bands,  
Makes clear our goal to every eye—  
The valley's western boundary.  
A gate swings to ! our tide hath flow'd  
Already from the silent road.  
The valley-pastures, one by one,  
Are threaded, quiet in the sun ;  
And now beyond the rude stone bridge  
Slopes gracious up the western ridge.  
Its woody border, and the last  
Of its dark upland farms is past—  
Cool farms, with open-lying stores,  
Under their burnish'd sycamores ;  
All past ! and through the trees we glide,  
Emerging on the green hill-side.  
There climbing hangs, a far-seen sign,  
Our wavering, many-colour'd line ;  
There winds, upstreaming slowly still  
Over the summit of the hill.  
And now, in front, behold outspread  
Those upper regions we must tread !  
Mild hollows, and clear heathy swells,  
The cheerful silence of the fells.  
Some two hours' march with serious air,  
Through the deep noontide heats we fare ;  
The red-grouse, springing at our sound,  
Skims, now and then, the shining ground ;  
No life, save his and ours, intrudes

Upon these breathless solitudes.  
O joy ! again the farms appear.  
Cool shade is there, and rustic cheer ;  
There springs the brook will guide us down,  
Bright comrade, to the noisy town.  
Lingering, we follow down ; we gain  
The town, the highway, and the plain.  
And many a mile of dusty way,  
Parch'd and road-worn, we made that day ;  
But, Fausta, I remember well,  
That as the balmy darkness fell  
We bathed our hands with speechless glee,  
That night, in the wide-glimmering sea.

Once more we tread this self-same road,  
Fausta, which ten years since we trod ;  
Alone we tread it, you and I,  
Ghosts of that boisterous company.  
Here, where the brook shines, near its head,  
In its clear, shallow, turf-fringed bed ;  
Here, whence the eye first sees, far down,  
Capp'd with faint smoke, the noisy town ;  
Here sit we, and again unroll,  
Though slowly, the familiar whole.  
The solemn wastes of heathy hill  
Sleep in the July sunshine still ;  
The self-same shadows now, as then,  
Play through this grassy upland glen ;  
The loose dark stones on the green way  
Lie strewn, it seems, where then they lay ;  
On this mild bank above the stream,  
(You crush them !) the blue gentians gleam.

Still this wild brook, the rushes cool,  
The sailing foam, the shining pool !  
These are not changed ; and we, you say,  
Are scarce more changed, in truth, than they.

The gipsies, whom we met below,  
They, too, have long roam'd to and fro ;  
They ramble, leaving, where they pass,  
Their fragments on the cumber'd grass.  
And often to some kindly place  
Chance guides the migratory race,  
Where, though long wanderings intervene,  
They recognise a former scene.  
The dingy tents are pitch'd ; the fires  
Give to the wind their wavering spires ;  
In dark knots crouch round the wild flame  
Their children, as when first they came ;  
They see their shackled beasts again  
Move, browsing, up the gray-wall'd lane.  
Signs are not wanting, which might raise  
The ghost in them of former days—  
Signs are not wanting, if they would ;  
Suggestions to disquietude.  
For them, for all, time's busy touch,  
While it mends little, troubles much.  
Their joints grow stiffer—but the year  
Runs his old round of dubious cheer ;  
Chilly they grow—yet winds in March,  
Still, sharp as ever, freeze and parch ;  
They must live still—and yet, God knows,  
Crowded and keen the country grows ;  
It seems as if, in their decay,  
The law grew stronger every day.



So might they reason, so compare,  
Fausta, times past with times that are.  
But no!—they rubb'd through yesterday  
In their hereditary way,  
And they will rub through, if they can,  
To-morrow on the self-same plan,  
Till death arrive to supersede,  
For them, vicissitude and need.

The poet, to whose mighty heart  
Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart,  
Subdues that energy to scan  
Not his own course, but that of man.  
Though he move mountains, though his day  
Be pass'd on the proud heights of sway,  
Though he hath loosed a thousand chains,  
Though he hath borne immortal pains,  
Action and suffering though he know—  
He hath not lived, if he lives so.  
He sees, in some great-historied land,  
A ruler of the people stand,  
Sees his strong thought in fiery flood  
Roll through the heaving multitude.  
Exults—yet for no moment's space  
Envies the all-regarded place.  
Beautiful eyes meet his—and he  
Bears to admire uncravingly ;  
They pass—he, mingled with the crowd,  
Is in their far-off triumphs proud.  
From some high station he looks down,  
At sunset, on a populous town ;  
Surveys each happy group, which fleets,  
Toil ended, through the shining streets,

Each with some errand of its own—  
And does not say : *I am alone.*  
He sees the gentle stir of birth  
When morning purifies the earth ;  
He leans upon a gate and sees  
The pastures, and the quiet trees.  
Low, woody hill, with gracious bound,  
Folds the still valley almost round ;  
The cuckoo, loud on some high lawn,  
Is answer'd from the depth of dawn ;  
In the hedge straggling to the stream,  
Pale, dew-drench'd, half-shut roses gleam ;  
But, where the farther side slopes down,  
He sees the drowsy new-waked clown  
In his white quaint-embroider'd frock  
Make, whistling, tow'rd his mist-wreathed flock—  
Slowly, behind his heavy tread,  
The wet, flower'd grass heaves up its head.  
Lean'd on his gate, he gazes—tears  
Are in his eyes, and in his ears  
The murmur of a thousand years.  
Before him he sees life unroll,  
A placid and continuous whole—  
That general life, which does not cease,  
Whose secret is not joy, but peace ;  
That life, whose dumb wish is not miss'd  
If birth proceeds, if things subsist ;  
The life of plants, and stones, and rain,  
The life he craves—if not in vain  
Fate gave, what chance shall not control,  
His sad lucidity of soul.

You listen—but that wandering smile,

Fausta, betrays you cold the while !  
 Your eyes pursue the bells of foam  
 Wash'd, eddying, from this bank, their home.  
*Those gipsies, so your thoughts I scan,*  
*Are less, the poet more, than man.*  
*They feel not, though they move and see ;*  
*Deeper the poet feels ; but he*  
*Breathes, when he will, immortal air,*  
*Where Orpheus and where Homer are.*  
*In the day's life, whose iron round*  
*Hems us all in, he is not bound ;*  
*He leaves his kind, o'erleaps their pen,*  
*And flees the common life of men.*  
*He escapes thence, but we abide—*  
*Not deep the poet sees, but wide.*

The world in which we live and move  
 Outlasts aversion, outlasts love,  
 Outlasts each effort, interest, hope,  
 Remorse, grief, joy ;—and were the scope  
 Of these affections wider made,  
 Man still would see, and see dismay'd,  
 Beyond his passion's widest range,  
 Far regions of eternal change.  
 Nay, and since death, which wipes out man,  
 Finds him with many an unsolved plan,  
 With much unknown, and much untried,  
 Wonder not dead, and thirst not dried,  
 Still gazing on the ever full  
 Eternal mundane spectacle—  
 This world in which we draw our breath,  
 In some sense, Fausta, outlasts death.

Blame thou not, therefore, him who dares  
Judge vain beforehand human cares ;  
Whose natural insight can discern  
What through experience others learn ;  
Who needs not love and power, to know  
Love transient, power an unreal show ;  
Who treads at ease life's uncheer'd ways—  
Him blame not, Fausta, rather praise !  
Rather thyself for some aim pray  
Nobler than this, to fill the day ;  
Rather that heart, which burns in thee,  
Ask, not to amuse, but to set free ;  
Be passionate hopes not ill resign'd  
For quiet, and a fearless mind.  
And though fate grudge to thee and me  
The poet's rapt security,  
Yet they, believe me, who await  
No gifts from chance, have conquer'd fate.  
They, winning room to see and hear,  
And to men's business not too near,  
Through clouds of individual strife  
Draw homeward to the general life.  
Like leaves by suns not yet uncurl'd ;  
To the wise, foolish ; to the world,  
Weak ;—yet not weak, I might reply,  
Not foolish, Fausta, in His eye,  
To whom each moment in its race,  
Crowd as we will its neutral space,  
Is but a quiet watershed  
Whence, equally, the seas of life and death are fed.

Enough, we live !—and if a life,  
With large results so little rife,

Though bearable, seem hardly worth  
This pomp of worlds, this pain of birth ;  
Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,  
The solemn hills around us spread,  
This stream which falls incessantly,  
The strange-scrawl'd rocks, the lonely sky,  
If I might lend their life a voice,  
Seem to bear rather than rejoice.  
And even could the intemperate prayer  
Man iterates, while these forbear,  
For movement, for an ampler sphere,  
Pierce Fate's impenetrable ear ;  
Not milder is the general lot  
Because our spirits have forgot,  
In action's dizzying eddy whirl'd,  
The something that infects the world.



NARRATIVE POEMS





## SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

### AN EPISODE

AND the first grey of morning fill'd the east,  
And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.  
But all the Tartar camp along the stream  
Was hush'd, and still the men were plūnged in sleep ;  
Sohrab alone, he slept not ; all night long  
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed ;  
But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,  
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,  
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,  
And went abroad into the cold wet fog,  
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.

Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which stood  
Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand  
Of Oxus, where the summer-floods o'erflow  
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere ;  
Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand,  
And to a hillock came, a little back  
From the stream's brink—the spot where first a boat,  
Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.  
The men of former times had crown'd the top  
With a clay fort ; but that was fall'n, and now  
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,

A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.  
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood  
Upon the thick piled carpets in the tent,  
And found the old man sleeping on his bed  
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.  
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step  
Was dull'd ; for he slept light, an old man's sleep ;  
And he rose quickly on one arm, and said :—

“ Who art thou ? for it is not yet clear dawn.  
Speak ! is there news, or any night alarm ? ”

But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said :—  
“ Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa ! it is I.  
The sun is not yet risen, and the foe  
Sleep ; but I sleep not ; all night long I lie  
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.  
For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek  
Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,  
In Samarcand, before the army march'd ;  
And I will tell thee what my heart desires.  
Thou know'st if, since from Ader-baijan first  
I came among the Tartars and bore arms,  
I have still served Afrasiab well, and shown,  
At my boy's years, the courage of a man.  
This too thou know'st, that while I still bear on  
The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,  
And beat the Persians back on every field,  
I seek one man, one man, and one alone—  
Rustum, my father ; who I hoped should greet,  
Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field,  
His not unworthy, not inglorious son.  
So I long hoped, but him I never find.  
Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.  
Let the two armies rest to-day ; but I

Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords  
To meet me, man to man ; if I prevail,  
Rustum will surely hear it ; if I fall—  
Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.  
Dim is the rumour of a common fight,  
Where host meets host, and many names are sunk ;  
But of a single combat fame speaks clear.”

He spoke ; and Peran-Wisa took the hand  
Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said :—

“O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine !  
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,  
And share the battle's common chance with us  
Who love thee, but must press for ever first,  
In single fight incurring single risk,  
To find a father thou hast never seen ?  
That were far best, my son, to stay with us  
Unmurmuring ; in our tents, while it is war,  
And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.  
But, if this one desire indeed rules all,  
To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight !  
Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,  
O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son !  
But far hence seek him, for he is not here.  
For now it is not as when I was young,  
When Rustum was in front of every fray ;  
But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,  
In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.  
Whether that his own mighty strength at last  
Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age,  
Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.  
There go !—Thou wilt not ? Yet my heart forebodes  
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.  
Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost

To us ; fain therefore send thee hence, in peace  
 To seek thy father, not seek single fights  
 In vain ;—but who can keep the lion's cub  
 From ravening, and who govern Rustum's son ?  
 Go, I will grant thee what thy heart desires."

So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left  
 His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay ;  
 And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat  
 He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,  
 And threw a white cloak round him, and he took  
 In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword ;  
 And on his head he set his sheep-skin cap,  
 Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul ;  
 And raised the curtain of his tent, and call'd  
 His herald to his side, and went abroad.

The sun by this had risen, and clear'd the fog  
 From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands.  
 And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed  
 Into the open plain ; so Haman bade—  
 Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled  
 The host, and still was in his lusty prime.  
 From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd ;  
 As when some grey November morn the files,  
 In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes  
 Stream over Casbin and the southern slopes  
 Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,  
 Or some froze Caspian reed-bed, southward bound  
 For the warm Persian sea-board—so they stream'd.  
 The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,  
 First, with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears ;  
 Large men, large steeds ; who from Bokhara come  
 And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.  
 Next, the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,

The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,  
And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands ;  
Light men and on light steeds, who only drink  
The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.  
And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came  
From far, and a more doubtful service own'd ;  
The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks  
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards  
And close-set skull-caps ; and those wilder hordes  
Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,  
Kalmucks and unkempt Kuzzaks, tribes who stray  
Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,  
Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere ;  
These all filed out from camp into the plain.  
And on the other side the Persians form'd ;—  
First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,  
The Ilyats of Khorassan ; and behind,  
The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,  
Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.  
But Peran-Wisa with his herald came,  
Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,  
And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.  
And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw  
That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,  
He took his spear, and to the front he came,  
And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they stood.  
And the old Tartar came upon the sand  
Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said :—  
“ Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear !  
Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.  
But choose a champion from the Persian lords  
To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man.”  
As, in the country, on a morn in June,

When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,  
 A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—  
 So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,  
 A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran  
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.

But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,  
 Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,  
 That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow ;  
 Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass  
 Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,  
 Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves  
 Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—  
 In single file they move, and stop their breath,  
 For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—  
 So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up  
 To counsel ; Gudurz and Zoarrah came,  
 And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host  
 Second, and was the uncle of the King ;  
 These came and counsell'd, and then Gudurz said :—

“ Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,  
 Yet champion have we none to match this youth.  
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.  
 But Rustum came last night ; aloof he sits  
 And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart.  
 Him will I seek, and carry to his ear  
 The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.  
 Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.  
 Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.”

So spake he ; and Ferood stood forth and cried :—  
 “ Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said !  
 Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.”

He spake : and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode

Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.  
But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,  
And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,  
Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.  
Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,  
Just pitch'd ; the high pavilion in the midst  
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.  
And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found  
Rustum ; his morning meal was done, but still  
The table stood before him, charged with food—  
A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,  
And dark green melons ; and there Rustum sate  
Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,  
And play'd with it ; but Gudurz came and stood  
Before him ; and he look'd, and saw him stand,  
And with a cry sprang up and dropp'd the bird,  
And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said :—

“ Welcome ! these eyes could see no better sight.  
What news ? but sit down first, and eat and drink.”

But Gudurz stood in the tent-door, and said :—  
“ Not now ! a time will come to eat and drink,  
But not to-day ; to-day has other needs.  
The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze ;  
For from the Tartars is a challenge brought  
To pick a champion from the Persian lords  
To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name—  
Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.  
O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's !  
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart ;  
And he is young, and Iran's chiefs are old,  
Or else too weak ; and all eyes turn to thee.  
Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose !”

He spoke ; but Rustum answer'd with a smile :—

"Go to! if Iran's chiefs are old, then I  
 Am older; if the young are weak, the King  
 Errs strangely; for the King, for Kai Khosroo,  
 Himself is young, and honours younger men,  
 And lets the aged moulder to their graves.  
 Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—  
 The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.  
 For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?  
 For would that I myself had such a son,  
 And not that one slight helpless girl I have—  
 A son so famed, so brave, to send to war,  
 And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,  
 My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,  
 And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,  
 And he has none to guard his weak old age.  
 There would I go, and hang my armour up,  
 And with my great name fence that weak old man,  
 And spend the goodly treasures I have got,  
 And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,  
 And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,  
 And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more."

He spoke, and smiled; and Gudurz made reply:—  
 "What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,  
 When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks  
 Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,  
 Hidest thy face? Take heed lest men should say:  
*Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,  
 And shuns to peril it with younger men.*"

And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply:—  
 "O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?  
 Thou knowest better words than this to say.  
 What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,  
 Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?"



Are not they mortal, am not I myself?  
But who for men of nought would do great deeds?  
Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame!  
But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;  
Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd  
In single fight with any mortal man."

He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz turn'd, and ran  
Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy—  
Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.  
But Rustum strode to his tent-door, and call'd  
His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,  
And clad himself in steel; the arms he chose  
Were plain, and on his shield was no device,  
Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,  
And, from the fluted spine atop, a plume  
Of horsehair waved, a scarlet horsehair plume.  
So arm'd, he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,  
Follow'd him like a faithful hound at heel—  
Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the earth,  
The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once  
Did in Bokhara by the river find  
A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,  
And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest,  
Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green  
Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd  
All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know.  
So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd  
The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.  
And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts  
Hail'd; but the Tartars knew not who he was.  
And dear as the wet diver to the eyes  
Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,  
By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,

Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,  
Having made up his tale of precious pearls,  
Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—  
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.

And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,  
And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.  
And as afield the reapers cut a swath  
Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,  
And on each side are squares of standing corn,  
And in the midst a stubble, short and bare—  
So on each side were squares of men, with spears  
Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.  
And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast  
His eyes toward the Tartar tents, and saw  
Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,  
Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge  
Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—  
At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,  
When the frost flowers the whiten'd window-panes—  
And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts  
Of that poor drudge may be ; so Rustum eyed  
The unknown adventurous youth, who from afar  
Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth  
All the most valiant chiefs ; long he perused  
His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.  
For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd ;  
Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,  
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws  
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,  
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—  
So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.  
And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul

As he beheld him coming ; and he stood,  
 And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said :—  
 “ O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,  
 And warm, and pleasant ; but the grave is cold !  
 Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.  
 Behold me ! I am vast, and clad in iron,  
 And tried ; and I have stood on many a field  
 Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe—  
 Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.  
 O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death ?  
 Be govern'd ! quit the Tartar host, and come  
 To Iran, and be as my son to me,  
 And fight beneath my banner till I die !  
 There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.”

So he spake, mildly ; Sohrab heard his voice,  
 The mighty voice of Rustum, and he saw  
 His giant figure planted on the sand,  
 Sole, like some single tower, which a chief  
 Hath builded on the waste in former years  
 Against the robbers ; and he saw that head,  
 Streak'd with its first grey hairs ;—hope filled his soul,  
 And he ran forward and embraced his knees,  
 And clasp'd his hand within his own, and said :—

“ O, by thy father's head ! by thine own soul !  
 Art thou not Rustum ? speak ! art thou not he ?”

But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth,  
 And turn'd away, and spake to his own soul :—

“ Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean !  
 False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.  
 For if I now confess this thing he asks,  
 And hide it not, but say : *Rustum is here !*  
 He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,  
 But he will find some pretext not to fight,

And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts  
 A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.  
 And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall,  
 In Samarcand, he will arise and cry :  
 ' I challenged once, when the two armies camp'd  
 Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords  
 To cope with me in single fight ; but they  
 Shrank, only Rustum dared ; then he and I  
 Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away.'  
 So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud ;  
 ' Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through me.'"

And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud :—  
 " Rise ! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus  
 Of Rustum ? I am here, whom thou hast call'd  
 By challenge forth ; make good thy vaunt, or yield !  
 Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight ?  
 Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee !  
 For well I know, that did great Rustum stand  
 Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,  
 There would be then no talk of fighting more.  
 But being what I am, I tell thee this—  
 Do thou record it in thine inmost soul :  
 Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt and yield,  
 Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds  
 Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer-floods,  
 Oxus in summer wash them all away."

He spoke ; and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet :—  
 " Art thou so fierce ? Thou wilt not fright me so !  
 I am no girl, to be made pale by words.  
 Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand  
 Here on this field, there were no fighting then.  
 But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.  
 Begin ! thou art more vast, more dread than I,

And thou art proved, I know, and I am young—  
But yet success sways with the breath of Heaven.  
And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure  
Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.

For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,  
Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate,  
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.

And whether it will heave us up to land,  
Or whether it will roll us out to sea,  
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,  
We know not, and no search will make us know ;  
Only the event will teach us in its hour.”

He spoke, and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd  
His spear ; down from the shoulder, down it came,  
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk,  
That long has tower'd in the airy clouds,  
Drops like a plummet ; Sohrab saw it come,  
And sprang aside, quick as a flash ; the spear  
Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,  
Which it sent flying wide ;—then Sohrab threw  
In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield ; sharp rang,  
The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.  
And Rustum seized his club, which none but he  
Could wield ; an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,  
Still rough—like those which men in treeless plains  
To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,  
Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up  
By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time  
Hath made in Himalayan forests wrack,  
And strewn the channels with torn boughs—so huge  
The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck  
One stroke ; but again Sohrab sprang aside,  
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came

Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.  
And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell  
To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand ;  
And now might Sohrab have unsheathed his sword,  
And pierced the mighty Rustum while he lay  
Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand ;  
But he look'd on, and smiled, nor bared his sword,  
But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said :—

“Thou strik'st too hard ! that club of thine will float  
Upon the summer-floods, and not my bones.  
But rise, and be not wroth ! not wroth am I ;  
No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.  
Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum ; be it so !  
Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul ?  
Boy as I am, I have seen battles too—  
Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,  
And heard their hollow roar of dying men ;  
But never was my heart thus touch'd before.  
Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the heart ?  
O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven !  
Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,  
And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,  
And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,  
And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.  
There are enough foes in the Persian host,  
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang ;  
Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou  
Mayst fight ; fight *them*, when they confront thy spear !  
But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me !”

He ceased, but while he spake, Rustum had risen,  
And stood erect, trembling with rage ; his club  
He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,  
Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-hand

Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn-star,  
The baleful sign of fevers ; dust had soil'd  
His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.  
His breast heaved, his lips foam'd, and twice his voice  
Was choked with rage ; at last these words broke way :—

“ Girl ! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands !  
Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words !  
Fight, let me hear thy hateful voice no more !  
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now  
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance ;  
But on the Oxus-sands, and in the dance  
Of battle, and with me, who make no play  
Of war ; I fight it out, and hand to hand.  
Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine !  
Remember all thy valour ; try thy feints  
And cunning ! all the pity I had is gone ;  
Because thou hast shamed me before both the hosts  
With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles.”

He spoke, and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,  
And he too drew his sword ; at once they rush'd  
Together, as two eagles on one prey  
Come rushing down together from the clouds,  
One from the east, one from the west ; their shields  
Dash'd with a clang together, and a din  
Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters  
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,  
Of hewing axes, crashing trees—such blows  
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.  
And you would say that sun and stars took part  
In that unnatural conflict ; for a cloud  
Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun  
Over the fighters' heads ; and a wind rose  
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,

And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.  
In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone ;  
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand  
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,  
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.  
But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes  
And labouring breath ; first Rustum struck the shield  
Which Sohrab held stiff out ; the steel-spiked spear  
Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,  
And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.  
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,  
Nor clove its steel quite through ; but all the crest  
He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,  
Never till now defiled, sank to the dust ;  
And Rustum bow'd his head ; but then the gloom  
Grew blacker, thunder rumbled in the air,  
And lightnings rent the cloud ; and Ruksh, the horse,  
Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry ;—  
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar  
Of some pain'd desert-lion, who all day  
Hath trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,  
And comes at night to die upon the sand.  
The two hosts heard that cry, and quaked for fear,  
And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.  
But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,  
And struck again ; and again Rustum bow'd  
His head ; but this time all the blade, like glass,  
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,  
And in the hand the hilt remain'd alone.  
Then Rustum raised his head ; his dreadful eyes  
Glared, and he shook on high his menacing spear,  
And shouted : *Rustum !*—Sohrab heard that shout,  
And shrank amazed ; back he recoil'd one step,



And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing form ;  
And then he stood bewilder'd ; and he dropp'd  
His covering shield, and the spear pierced his side.  
He reel'd, and staggering back, sank to the ground ;  
And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell,  
And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all  
The cloud ; and the two armies saw the pair—  
Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,  
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.

Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began :—  
“ Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill  
A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,  
And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent.  
Or else that the great Rustum would come down  
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move  
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.  
And then that all the Tartar host would praise  
Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,  
To glad thy father in his weak old age.  
Fool, thou art slain, and by an unknown man !  
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be  
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old.”

And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied :—  
“ Unknown thou art ; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.  
Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man !  
No ! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.  
For were I match'd with ten such men as thee,  
And I were that which till to-day I was,  
They should be lying here, I standing there.  
But that belovéd name unnerved my arm—  
That name, and something, I confess, in thee,  
Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield  
Fall ; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe.

And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.  
 But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear  
 The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!  
 My father, whom I seek through all the world,  
 He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!"

As when some hunter in the spring hath found  
 A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,  
 Upon the craggy isle of a hill-lake,  
 And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,  
 And follow'd her to find her where she fell  
 Far off;—anon her mate comes winging back  
 From hunting, and a great way off descries  
 His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks  
 His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps  
 Circles above his eyry, with loud screams  
 Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she  
 Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,  
 In some far stony gorge out of his ken,  
 A heap of fluttering feathers—never more  
 Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;  
 Never the black and dripping precipices  
 Echo her stormy scream as she sails by—  
 As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,  
 So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood  
 Over his dying son, and knew him not.

But, with a cold incredulous voice, he said:—  
 "What prate is this of fathers and revenge?  
 The mighty Rustum never had a son."

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied:—  
 "Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.  
 Surely the news will one day reach his ear,  
 Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,  
 Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here,

And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap  
To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.  
Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son!  
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be?  
Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen!  
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,  
My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells  
With that old king, her father, who grows grey  
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.  
Her most I pity, who no more will see  
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,  
With spoils and honour, when the war is done.  
But a dark rumour will be bruited up,  
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;  
And then will that defenceless woman learn  
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more,  
But that in battle with a nameless foe,  
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain."

He spoke; and as he ceased, he wept aloud,  
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.  
He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plunged in thought.  
Nor did he yet believe it was his son  
Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew;  
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,  
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,  
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all—  
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear  
Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms  
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,  
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son;  
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.  
So deem'd he; yet he listen'd, plunged in thought  
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide

Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore  
 At the full moon ; tears gather'd in his eyes ;  
 For he remember'd his own early youth,  
 And all its bounding rapture ; as, at dawn,  
 The shepherd from his mountain-lodge descries  
 A far, bright city, smitten by the sun,  
 Through many rolling clouds—so Rustum saw  
 His youth ; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom ;  
 And that old king, her father, who loved well  
 His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child  
 With joy : and all the pleasant life they led,  
 They three, in that long-distant summer-time—  
 The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt  
 And hound, and morn on those delightful hills  
 In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,  
 Of age and looks to be his own dear son,  
 Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,  
 Like some rich hyacinth which by the scythe  
 Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,  
 Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,  
 And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,  
 On the mown, dying grass—so Sohrab lay,  
 Lovely in death, upon the common sand.

And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and said :—

“O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son  
 Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have loved.  
 Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men  
 Have told thee false—thou art not Rustum's son.  
 For Rustum had no son ; one child he had—  
 But one—a girl ; who with her mother now  
 Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—  
 Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.”

But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath ; for now

The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew fierce,  
And he desired to draw forth the steel,  
And let the blood flow free, and so to die—  
But first he would convince his stubborn foe ;  
And, rising sternly on one arm, he said :—

“ Man, who art thou who dost deny my words ?  
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,  
And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.  
I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear  
That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,  
That she might prick it on the babe she bore.”

He spoke ; and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks,  
And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand  
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,  
That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud ;  
And to his heart he press'd the other hand,  
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said :—

“ Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie !  
If thou show this, then art thou Rustum's son.”

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed  
His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,  
And show'd a sign in faint vermilion points  
Prick'd ; as a cunning workman, in Pekin,  
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,  
An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,  
And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp  
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands—  
So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd  
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.  
It was that griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,  
Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,  
A helpless babe, among the mountain-rocks ;  
Him that kind creature found, and rear'd, and loved—

Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign,  
 And Sohrab bared that image on his arm,  
 And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,  
 And then he touch'd it with his hand and said :—

“ How say'st thou ? Is that sign the proper sign  
 Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's ? ”

He spoke ; but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and stood  
 Speechless ; and then he utter'd one sharp cry :

*O boy—thy father !*—and his voice choked there.

And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,  
 And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.

But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast  
 His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,  
 And with fond faltering fingers stroked his cheeks,  
 Trying to call him back to life ; and life

Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,  
 And they stood wide with horror ; and he seized  
 In both his hands the dust which lay around,  
 And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair,—  
 His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms ;  
 And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,  
 And his sobs choked him ; and he clutch'd his sword,  
 To draw it, and for ever let life out.

But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,  
 And with a soothing voice he spake, and said :—

“ Father, forbear ! for I but meet to-day  
 The doom which at my birth was written down  
 In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand.  
 Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,  
 When first I saw thee ; and thy heart spoke too,  
 I know it ! but fate trod those promptings down  
 Under its iron heel ; fate, fate engaged  
 The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.

But let us speak no more of this ! I find  
My father ; let me feel that I have found !  
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take  
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,  
And wash them with thy tears, and say : *My son !*  
Quick ! quick ! for number'd are my sands of life,  
And swift ; for like the lightning to this field  
I came, and like the wind I go away—  
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.  
But it was writ in Heaven that this should be.”

So said he, and his voice released the heart  
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth ; he cast  
His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,  
And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts,  
When they saw Rustum's grief ; and Ruksh, the horse,  
With his head bowing to the ground and mane  
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe  
First to the one then to the other moved  
His head, as if inquiring what their grief  
Might mean ; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,  
The big warm tears roll'd down, and caked the sand.  
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said :—

“ Ruksh, now thou grieveest ; but, O Ruksh, thy feet  
Should first have rotted on their nimble joints,  
Or ere they brought thy master to this field !”

But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said ;—  
“ Is this, then, Ruksh ? How often, in past days,  
My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed,  
My terrible father's terrible horse ! and said,  
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.  
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane !  
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I ;  
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,

And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.  
 And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,  
 And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake  
 Of Zirrah ; and the aged Zal himself  
 Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,  
 Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,  
 And said ; *O Ruksh ! bear Rustum well !*—but I  
 Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,  
 Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,  
 Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund stream ;  
 But lodged among my father's foes, and seen  
 Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,  
 Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,  
 And the black Toorkmun tents ; and only drunk  
 The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,  
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,  
 The northern Sir ; and this great Oxus stream,  
 The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die."

Then, with a heavy groan, Rustum bewail'd :—  
 " Oh, that its waves were flowing over me !  
 Oh, that I saw its grains of yellow silt  
 Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head ! "

But, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied :—  
 " Desire not that, my father ! thou must live.  
 For some are born to do great deeds, and live,  
 As some are born to be obscured, and die.  
 Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,  
 And reap a second glory in thine age ;  
 'Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.  
 But come ! thou seest this great host of men  
 Which follow me ; I pray thee, slay not these !  
 Let me entreat for them ; what have they done ?  
 They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.



Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.  
But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,  
But carry me with thee to Seistan,  
And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,  
Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.  
And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,  
And heap a stately mound above my bones,  
And plant a far-seen pillar over all.  
That so the passing horseman on the waste  
May see my tomb a great way off, and cry :  
*Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,*  
*Whom his great father did in ignorance kill !*  
And I be not forgotten in my grave."

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied :—  
“Fear not ! as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,  
So shall it be ; for I will burn my tents,  
And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,  
And carry thee away to Seistan,  
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,  
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.  
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,  
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,  
And plant a far-seen pillar over all,  
And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.  
And I will spare thy host ; yea, let them go !  
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace !  
What should I do with slaying any more ?  
For would that all that I have ever slain  
Might be once more alive ; my bitterest foes,  
And they who were call'd champions in their time,  
And through whose death I won that fame I have—  
And I were nothing but a common man,  
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,

So thou mightest live too, my son, my son !  
 Or rather would that I, even I myself,  
 Might now be lying on this bloody sand,  
 Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,  
 Not thou of mine ! and I might die, not thou ;  
 And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan ;  
 And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine ;  
 And say : *O son, I weep thee not too sore,  
 For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end !*  
 But now in blood and battles was my youth,  
 And full of blood and battles is my age,  
 And I shall never end this life of blood."

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied :—  
 "A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful man !  
 But thou shalt yet have peace ; only not now,  
 Not yet ! but thou shalt have it on that day,  
 When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,  
 Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo,  
 Returning home over the salt blue sea,  
 From laying thy dear master in his grave."

And Rustum gazed in Sohrab's face, and said :—  
 "Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea !  
 'Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure."

He spoke ; and Sohrab smiled on him, and took  
 The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased  
 His wound's imperious anguish ; but the blood  
 Came welling from the open gash, and life  
 Flow'd with the stream ;—all down his cold white side  
 The crimson torrent ran, dim now and soil'd,  
 Like the soil'd tissue of white violets  
 Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,  
 By children whom their nurses call with haste  
 Indoors from the sun's eye ; his head droop'd low,

His limbs grew slack ; motionless, white, he lay—  
 White, with eyes closed ; only when heavy gasps,  
 Deep heavy gasps quivering through all his frame,  
 Convulsed him back to life, he open'd them,  
 And fix'd them feebly on his father's face ;  
 Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs  
 Unwillingly the spirit fled away,  
 Regretting the warm mansion which it left,  
 And youth, and bloom, and this delightful world.

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead ;  
 And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak  
 Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.  
 As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd  
 By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear  
 His house, now 'mid their broken flights of steps  
 Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—  
 So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.

And night came down over the solemn waste,  
 And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,  
 And darken'd all ; and a cold fog, with night,  
 Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,  
 As of a great assembly loosed, and fires  
 Began to twinkle through the fog ; for now  
 Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal ;  
 The Persians took it on the open sands  
 Southward, the Tartars by the river marge ;  
 And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic river floated on,  
 Out of the mist and hum of that low land,  
 Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,  
 Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian waste,  
 Under the solitary moon ;—he flow'd  
 Right for the polar star, past Orgunjè,

Brimming, and bright, and large ; then sands begin  
 To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,  
 And split his currents ; that for many a league  
 The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along  
 Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—  
 Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had  
 In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,  
 A foil'd circuitous wanderer—till at last  
 The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide  
 His luminous home of waters opens, bright  
 And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars  
 Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

### THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA

#### *Hussein*

O MOST just Vizier, send away  
 The cloth-merchants, and let them be,  
 Them and their dues, this day ! the King  
 Is ill at ease, and calls for thee.

#### *The Vizier*

O merchants, tarry yet a day  
 Here in Bokhara ! but at noon,  
 To-morrow, come, and ye shall pay  
 Each fortieth web of cloth to me,  
 As the law is, and go your way.

O Hussein, lead me to the King !  
 Thou teller of sweet tales, thine own,  
 Ferdousi's, and the others', lead !  
 How is it with my lord ?

*Hussein*

Alone,  
 Ever since prayer-time, he doth wait,  
 O Vizier ! without lying down,  
 In the great window of the gate,  
 Looking into the Registràn,  
 Where through the sellers' booths the slaves  
 Are this way bringing the dead man.—  
 O Vizier, here is the King's door !

*The King*

O Vizier, I may bury him ?

*The Vizier*

O King, thou know'st, I have been sick  
 These many days, and heard no thing  
 (For Allah shut my ears and mind),  
 Not even what thou dost, O King !  
 Wherefore, that I may counsel thee,  
 Let Hussein, if thou wilt, make haste  
 To speak in order what hath chanced.

*The King*

O Vizier, be it as thou say'st !

*Hussein*

Three days since, at the time of prayer  
 A certain Moollah, with his robe

All rent, and dust upon his hair,  
 Watch'd my lord's coming forth, and push'd  
 The golden mace-bearers aside,  
 And fell at the King's feet, and cried :

“Justice, O King, and on myself!  
 On this great sinner, who did break  
 The law, and by the law must die!  
 Vengeance, O King !”

But the King spake :  
 “What fool is this, that hurts our ears  
 With folly? or what drunken slave?  
 My guards, what, prick him with your spears!  
 Prick me the fellow from the path!”  
 As the King said, so it was done,  
 And to the mosque my lord pass'd on.

But on the morrow, when the King  
 Went forth again, the holy book  
 Carried before him, as is right,  
 And through the square his way he took ;  
 My man comes running, fleck'd with blood  
 From yesterday, and falling down  
 Cries out most earnestly : “O King,  
 My lord, O King, do right, I pray !

“How canst thou, ere thou hear, discern  
 If I speak folly? but a king,  
 Whether a thing be great or small,  
 Like Allah, hears and judges all.

“Wherefore hear thou! Thou know'st, how fierce  
 In these last days the sun hath burn'd :  
 That the green water in the tanks

Is to a putrid puddle turn'd ;  
And the canal, which from the stream  
Of Samarcand is brought this way,  
Wastes, and runs thinner every day.

“ Now I at nightfall had gone forth  
Alone, and in a darksome place  
Under some mulberry-trees I found  
A little pool ; and in short space,  
With all the water that was there  
I fill'd my pitcher, and stole home  
Unseen ; and having drink to spare,  
I hid the can behind the door,  
And went up on the roof to sleep.

“ But in the night, which was with wind  
And burning dust, again I creep  
Down, having fever, for a drink.

“ Now meanwhile had my brethren found  
The water-pitcher, where it stood  
Behind the door upon the ground,  
And call'd my mother ; and they all,  
As they were thirsty, and the night  
Most sultry, drain'd the pitcher there ;  
That they sate with it, in my sight,  
Their lips still wet, when I came down.

“ Now mark ! I, being fever'd, sick  
(Most unblest also), at that sight  
Brake forth, and cursed them—dost thou hear?—  
One was my mother——Now, do right !”

But my lord mused a space, and said :  
“ Send him away, Sirs, and make on !

It is some madman !” the King said.  
As the King bade, so was it done.

The morrow, at the self-same hour,  
In the King’s path, behold, the man,  
Not kneeling, sternly fix’d ! he stood  
Right opposite, and thus began,  
Frowning grim down : “Thou wicked King,  
Most deaf where thou shouldst most give ear !  
What, must I howl in the next world,  
Because thou wilt not listen here ?

“What, wilt thou pray, and get thee grace,  
And all grace shall to me be grudged ?  
Nay but, I swear, from this thy path  
I will not stir till I be judged !”

Then they who stood about the King  
Drew close together and conferr’d ;  
Till that the King stood forth and said :  
“Before the priests thou shalt be heard.”

But when the Ulemas were met,  
And the thing heard, they doubted not ;  
But sentenced him, as the law is,  
To die by stoning on the spot.

Now the King charged us secretly :  
“Stoned must he be, the law stands so.  
Yet, if he seek to fly, give way ;  
Hinder him not, but let him go.”

So saying, the King took a stone,  
And cast it softly ;—but the man,  
With a great joy upon his face,  
Kneel’d down, and cried not, neither ran.



So they, whose lot it was, cast stones,  
That they flew thick and bruised him sore.  
But he praised Allah with loud voice,  
And remain'd kneeling as before.

My lord had cover'd up his face ;  
But when one told him, " He is dead,"  
Turning him quickly to go in,  
" Bring thou to me his corpse," he said.

And truly, while I speak, O King,  
I hear the bearers on the stair ;  
Wilt thou they straightway bring him in ?  
—Ho ! enter ye who tarry there !

*The Vizier*

O King, in this I praise thee not !  
Now must I call thy grief not wise.  
Is he thy friend, or of thy blood,  
To find such favour in thine eyes ?

Nay, were he thine own mother's son,  
Still, thou art king, and the law stands.  
It were not meet the balance swerved,  
The sword were broken in thy hands.

But being nothing, as he is,  
Why for no cause make sad thy face ?—  
Lo, I am old ! three kings, ere thee,  
Have I seen reigning in this place.

But who, through all this length of time,  
Could bear the burden of his years,  
If he for strangers pain'd his heart  
Not less than those who merit tears ?

Fathers we *must* have, wife and child,  
 And grievous is the grief for these ;  
 This pain alone, which *must* be borne,  
 Makes the head white, and bows the knees.

But other loads than this his own  
 One man is not well made to bear.  
 Besides, to each are his own friends,  
 To mourn with him, and show him care.

Look, this is but one single place,  
 Though it be great ; all the earth round,  
 If a man bear to have it so,  
 Things which might vex him shall be found.

Upon the Russian frontier, where  
 The watchers of two armies stand  
 Near one another, many a man,  
 Seeking a prey unto his hand,

Hath snatch'd a little fair-hair'd slave ;  
 They snatch also, towards Mervè,  
 The Shiah dogs, who pasture sheep,  
 And up from thence to Orgunjè.

And these all, labouring for a lord,  
 Eat not the fruit of their own hands ;  
 Which is the heaviest of all plagues,  
 To that man's mind, who understands.

The kaffirs also (whom God curse !)  
 Vex one another, night and day ;  
 There are the lepers, and all sick ;  
 There are the poor, who faint away

All these have sorrow, and keep still,  
 Whilst other men make cheer, and sing.  
 Wilt thou have pity on all these?  
 No, nor on this dead dog, O King!

*The King*

O Vizier, thou art old, I young!  
 Clear in these things I cannot see.  
 My head is burning, and a heat  
 Is in my skin which angers me.

But hear ye this, ye sons of men!  
 They that bear rule, and are obey'd,  
 Unto a rule more strong than theirs  
 Are in their turn obedient made.

In vain therefore, with wistful eyes  
 Gazing up hither, the poor man,  
 Who loiters by the high-heap'd booths,  
 Below there, in the Registràn,

Says: "Happy he, who lodges there!  
 With silken raiment, store of rice,  
 And for this drought, all kinds of fruits,  
 Grape-syrup, squares of colour'd ice,

"With cherries serv'd in drifts of snow."  
 In vain hath a king power to build  
 Houses, arcades, enamell'd mosques;  
 And to make orchard-closes, fill'd

With curious fruit-trees brought from far  
 With cisterns for the winter-rain,  
 And, in the desert, spacious inns  
 In divers places—if that pain

Is not more lighten'd, which he feels,  
 If his will be not satisfied ;  
 And that it be not, from all time  
 'The law is planted, to abide.

'Thou wast a sinner, thou poor man !  
 'Thou wast athirst ; and didst not see,  
 'That, though we take what we desire,  
 We must not snatch it eagerly.

And I have meat and drink at will,  
 And rooms of treasures, not a few.  
 But I am sick, nor heed I these ;  
 And what I would, I cannot do.

Even the great honour which I have,  
 When I am dead, will soon grow still ;  
 So have I neither joy, nor fame.  
 But what I can do, that I will.

I have a fretted brick-work tomb  
 Upon a hill on the right hand,  
 Hard by a close of apricots,  
 Upon the road of Samarcand ;

Thither, O Vizier, will I bear  
 This man my pity could not save,  
 And, plucking up the marble flags,  
 There lay his body in my grave.

Bring water, nard, and linen rolls !  
 Wash off all blood, set smooth each limb !  
 Then say : " He was not wholly vile,  
 Because a king shall bury him."

BALDER DEAD<sup>7</sup>

## I. SENDING

So on the floor lay Balder dead ; and round  
Lay thickly strewn swords, axes, darts, and spears,  
Which all the Gods in sport had idly thrown  
At Balder, whom no weapon pierced or clove ;  
But in his breast stood fixt the fatal bough  
Of mistletoe, which Lok the Accuser gave  
To Hoder, and unwitting Hoder threw—  
'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm.

And all the Gods and all the Heroes came,  
And stood round Balder on the bloody floor,  
Weeping and wailing ; and Valhalla rang  
Up to its golden roof with sobs and cries ;  
And on the tables stood the untasted meats,  
And in the horns and gold-rimm'd skulls the wine.  
And now would night have fall'n, and found them yet  
Wailing ; but otherwise was Odin's will.  
And thus the father of the ages spake :—

“ Enough of tears, ye Gods, enough of wail !  
Not to lament in was Valhalla made.  
If any here might weep for Balder's death,  
I most might weep, his father ; such a son  
I lose to-day, so bright, so loved a God.  
But he has met that doom, which long ago  
The Nornies, when his mother bare him, spun,  
And fate set seal, that so his end must be.  
Balder has met his death, and ye survive—  
Weep him an hour, but what can grief avail ?  
For ye yourselves, ye Gods, shall meet your doom,

All ye who hear me, and inhabit Heaven,  
 And I too, Odin too, the Lord of all.  
 But ours we shall not meet, when that day comes,  
 With women's tears and weak complaining cries—  
 Why should we meet another's portion so?  
 Rather it fits you, having wept your hour,  
 With cold dry eyes, and hearts composed and stern,  
 To live, as erst, your daily life in Heaven.  
 By me shall vengeance on the murderer Lok,  
 The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,  
 Be strictly cared for, in the appointed day.  
 Meanwhile, to-morrow, when the morning dawns,  
 Bring wood to the seashore to Balder's ship,  
 And on the deck build high a funeral-pile,  
 And on the top lay Balder's corpse, and put  
 Fire to the wood, and send him out to sea  
 To burn; for that is what the dead desire."

So spake the King of Gods, and straightway rose,  
 And mounted his horse Sleipner, whom he rode;  
 And from the hall of Heaven he rode away  
 To Lidskialf, and sate upon his throne,  
 The mount, from whence his eye surveys the world.  
 And far from Heaven he turn'd his shining orbs  
 To look on Midgard, and the earth, and men.  
 And on the conjuring Lapps he bent his gaze  
 Whom antler'd reindeer pull over the snow;  
 And on the Finns, the gentlest of mankind,  
 Fair men, who live in holes under the ground;  
 Nor did he look once more to Ida's plain,  
 Nor tow'rd Valhalla, and the sorrowing Gods;  
 For well he knew the Gods would heed his word,  
 And cease to mourn, and think of Balder's pyre.

But in Valhalla all the Gods went back

From around Balder, all the Heroes went ;  
And left his body stretch'd upon the floor.  
And on their golden chairs they sate again,  
Beside the tables, in the hall of Heaven ;  
And before each the cooks who served them placed  
New messes of the boar Serimner's flesh,  
And the Valkyries crown'd their horns with mead.  
So they, with pent-up hearts and tearless eyes,  
Wailing no more, in silence ate and drank,  
While twilight fell, and sacred night came on.

But the blind Hoder left the feasting Gods  
In Odin's hall, and went through Asgard streets,  
And past the haven where the Gods have moor'd  
Their ships, and through the gate, beyond the wall ;  
Though sightless, yet his own mind led the God.  
Down to the margin of the roaring sea  
He came, and sadly went along the sand,  
Between the waves and black o'erhanging cliffs  
Where in and out the screaming sea-fowl fly ;  
Until he came to where a gully breaks  
Through the cliff-wall, and a fresh stream runs down  
From the high moors behind, and meets the sea.  
There, in the glen, Fensaler stands, the house  
Of Frea, honour'd mother of the Gods,  
And shows its lighted windows to the main.  
There he went up, and pass'd the open doors ;  
And in the hall he found those women old,  
The prophetesses, who by rite eterne  
On Frea's hearth feed high the sacred fire  
Both night and day ; and by the inner wall  
Upon her golden chair the Mother sate,  
With folded hands, revolving things to come.  
To her drew Hoder near, and spake, and said :—

“Mother, a child of bale thou bar’st in me !  
 For, first, thou barest me with blinded eyes,  
 Sightless and helpless, wandering weak in Heaven ;  
 And, after that, of ignorant witless mind  
 Thou barest me, and unforeseeing soul ;  
 That I alone must take the branch from Lok,  
 The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,  
 And cast it at the dear-loved Balder’s breast  
 At whom the Gods in sport their weapons threw—  
 ’Gainst that alone had Balder’s life no charm.  
 Now therefore what to attempt, or whither fly,  
 For who will bear my hateful sight in Heaven ?  
 Can I, O mother, bring them Balder back ?  
 Or—for thou know’st the fates, and things allow’d—  
 Can I with Hela’s power a compact strike,  
 And make exchange, and give my life for his ?”

He spoke : the mother of the Gods replied :—  
 “Hoder, ill-fated, child of bale, my son,  
 Sightless in soul and eye, what words are these ?  
 That one, long portion’d with his doom of death,  
 Should change his lot, and fill another’s life,  
 And Hela yield to this, and let him go !  
 On Balder Death hath laid her hand, not thee ;  
 Nor doth she count this life a price for that.  
 For many Gods in Heaven, not thou alone,  
 Would freely die to purchase Balder back,  
 And wend themselves to Hela’s gloomy realm.  
 For not so gladsome is that life in Heaven  
 Which Gods and heroes lead, in feast and fray,  
 Waiting the darkness of the final times,  
 That one should grudge its loss for Balder’s sake,  
 Balder their joy, so bright, so loved a God.  
 But fate withstands, and laws forbid this way.



Yet in my secret mind one way I know,  
Nor do I judge if it shall win or fail ;  
But much must still be tried, which shall but fail."

And the blind Hoder answer'd her, and said :—  
"What way is this, O mother, that thou show'st ?  
Is it a matter which a God might try ?"

And straight the mother of the Gods replied :—  
"There is a road which leads to Hela's realm,  
Untrodden, lonely, far from light and Heaven.  
Who goes that way must take no other horse  
To ride, but Sleipner, Odin's horse, alone.  
Nor must he choose that common path of Gods  
Which every day they come and go in Heaven,  
O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
Past Midgard fortress, down to earth and men.  
But he must tread a dark untravell'd road  
Which branches from the north of Heaven, and ride  
Nine days, nine nights, toward the northern ice,  
Through valleys deep-engulph'd, with roaring streams.  
And he will reach on the tenth morn a bridge  
Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,  
Not Bifrost, but that bridge a damsel keeps,  
Who tells the passing troops of dead their way  
To the low shore of ghosts, and Hela's realm.  
And she will bid him northward steer his course.  
Then he will journey through no lighted land,  
Nor see the sun arise, nor see it set ;  
But he must ever watch the northern Bear,  
Who from her frozen height with jealous eye  
Confronts the Dog and Hunter in the south,  
And is alone not dipt in Ocean's stream.  
And straight he will come down to Ocean's strand—  
Ocean, whose watery ring enfolds the world,

And on whose marge the ancient giants dwell.  
 But he will reach its unknown northern shore,  
 Far, far beyond the outmost giant's home,  
 At the chink'd fields of ice, the waste of snow.  
 And he must fare across the dismal ice  
 Northward, until he meets a stretching wall  
 Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.  
 But then he must dismount, and on the ice  
 Tighten the girths of Sleipner, Odin's horse,  
 And make him leap the grate, and come within.  
 And he will see stretch round him Hela's realm,  
 The plains of Niflheim, where dwell the dead,  
 And hear the roaring of the streams of Hell.  
 And he will see the feeble, shadowy tribes,  
 And Balder sitting crown'd, and Hela's throne.  
 Then must he not regard the wailful ghosts  
 Who all will flit, like eddying leaves, around ;  
 But he must straight accost their solemn queen,  
 And pay her homage, and entreat with prayers,  
 Telling her all that grief they have in Heaven  
 For Balder, whom she holds by right below ;  
 If haply he may melt her heart with words,  
 And make her yield, and give him Balder back."

She spoke ; but Hoder answer'd her and said :—  
 " Mother, a dreadful way is this thou show'st ;  
 No journey for a sightless God to go !"

And straight the mother of the Gods replied :—  
 " Therefore thyself thou shalt not go, my son.  
 But he whom first thou meetest when thou com'st  
 To Asgard, and declar'st this hidden way,  
 Shall go ; and I will be his guide unseen."

She spoke, and on her face let fall her veil,  
 And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands,

But at the central hearth those women old,  
 Who while the Mother spake had ceased their toil,  
 Began again to heap the sacred fire.  
 And Hoder turn'd, and left his mother's house,  
 Fensaler, whose lit windows look to sea ;  
 And came again down to the roaring waves,  
 And back along the beach to Asgard went,  
 Pondering on that which Frea said should be.

But night came down, and darken'd Asgard streets  
 Then from their loathéd feasts the Gods arose,  
 And lighted torches, and took up the corpse  
 Of Balder from the floor of Odin's hall,  
 And laid it on a bier, and bare him home  
 Through the fast-darkening streets to his own house,  
 Breidablik, on whose columns Balder graved  
 The enchantments that recall the dead to life.  
 For wise he was, and many curious arts,  
 Postures of runes, and healing herbs he knew ;  
 Unhappy ! but that art he did not know,  
 To keep his own life safe, and see the sun.  
 There to his hall the Gods brought Balder home,  
 And each bespake him as he laid him down :—

“ Would that ourselves, O Balder, we were borne  
 Home to our halls, with torchlight, by our kin,  
 So thou might'st live, and still delight the Gods ! ”

They spake ; and each went home to his own house.  
 But there was one, the first of all the Gods  
 For speed, and Hermod was his name in Heaven ;  
 Most fleet he was, but now he went the last,  
 Heavy in heart for Balder, to his house,  
 Which he in Asgard built him, there to dwell,  
 Against the harbour, by the city-wall.  
 Him the blind Hoder met, as he came up

From the sea cityward, and knew his step ;  
 Nor yet could Hermod see his brother's face,  
 For it grew dark ; but Hoder touch'd his arm.  
 And as a spray of honeysuckle flowers  
 Brushes across a tired traveller's face  
 Who shuffles through the deep dew-moisten'd dust,  
 On a May evening, in the darken'd lanes,  
 And starts him, that he thinks a ghost went by—  
 So Hoder brush'd by Hermod's side, and said :—

“Take Sleipner, Hermod, and set forth with dawn  
 To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back ;  
 And they shall be thy guides, who have the power.”

He spake, and brush'd soft by, and disappear'd.  
 And Hermod gazed into the night, and said :—

“Who is it utters through the dark his hest  
 So quickly, and will wait for no reply ?  
 The voice was like the unhappy Hoder's voice.  
 Howbeit I will see, and do his hest ;  
 For there rang note divine in that command.”

So speaking, the fleet-footed Hermod came  
 Home, and lay down to sleep in his own house ;  
 And all the Gods lay down in their own homes.  
 And Hoder too came home, distraught with grief,  
 Loathing to meet, at dawn, the other Gods ;  
 And he went in, and shut the door, and fixt  
 His sword upright, and fell on it, and died.

But from the hill of Lidskialf Odin rose,  
 The throne, from which his eye surveys the world ;  
 And mounted Sleipner, and in darkness rode  
 To Asgard. And the stars came out in heaven,  
 High over Asgard, to light home the King.  
 But fiercely Odin gallop'd, moved in heart ;  
 And swift to Asgard, to the gate, he came.

And terribly the hoofs of Sleipner rang  
Along the flinty floor of Asgard streets,  
And the Gods trembled on their golden beds  
Hearing the wrathful Father coming home—  
For dread, for like a whirlwind, Odin came.  
And to Valhalla's gate he rode, and left  
Sleipner ; and Sleipner went to his own stall ;  
And in Valhalla Odin laid him down.

But in Breidablik, Nanna, Balder's wife,  
Came with the Goddesses who wrought her will,  
And stood by Balder lying on his bier.  
And at his head and feet she station'd Scalds  
Who in their lives were famous for their song ;  
These o'er the corpse intoned a plaintive strain,  
A dirge—and Nanna and her train replied.  
And far into the night they wail'd their dirge.  
But when their souls were satisfied with wail,  
They went, and laid them down, and Nanna went  
Into an upper chamber, and lay down ;  
And Frea seal'd her tired lids with sleep.

And 'twas when night is bordering hard on dawn,  
When air is chilliest, and the stars sunk low ;  
Then Balder's spirit through the gloom drew near,  
In garb, in form, in feature as he was,  
Alive ; and still the rays were round his head  
Which were his glorious mark in Heaven ; he stood  
Over against the curtain of the bed,  
And gazed on Nanna as she slept, and spake :—

“ Poor lamb, thou sleepest, and forgett'st thy woe !  
Tears stand upon the lashes of thine eyes,  
Tears wet the pillow by thy cheek ; but thou,  
Like a young child, hast cried thyself to sleep.  
Sleep on ; I watch thee, and am here to aid.

Alive I kept not far from thee, dear soul !  
Neither do I neglect thee now, though dead.  
For with to-morrow's dawn the Gods prepare  
To gather wood, and build a funeral-pile  
Upon my ship, and burn my corpse with fire,  
That sad, sole honour of the dead ; and thee  
They think to burn, and all my choicest wealth,  
With me, for thus ordains the common rite.  
But it shall not be so ; but mild, but swift,  
But painless shall a stroke from Frea come,  
To cut thy thread of life, and free thy soul,  
And they shall burn thy corpse with mine, not thee.  
And well I know that by no stroke of death,  
Tardy or swift, would'st thou be loath to die,  
So it restored thee, Nanna, to my side,  
Whom thou so well hast loved ; but I can smooth  
Thy way, and this, at least, my prayers avail.  
Yes, and I fain would altogether ward  
Death from thy head, and with the Gods in Heaven  
Prolong thy life, though not by thee desired—  
But right bars this, not only thy desire.  
Yet dreary, Nanna, is the life they lead  
In that dim world, in Hela's mouldering realm ;  
And doleful are the ghosts, the troops of dead,  
Whom Hela with austere control presides.  
For of the race of Gods is no one there,  
Save me alone, and Hela, solemn queen ;  
And all the nobler souls of mortal men  
On battle-field have met their death, and now  
Feast in Valhalla, in my father's hall ;  
Only the inglorious sort are there below,  
The old, the cowards, and the weak are there—  
Men spent by sickness, or obscure decay.

But even there, O Nanna, we might find  
 Some solace in each other's look and speech,  
 Wandering together through that gloomy world,  
 And talking of the life we led in Heaven,  
 While we yet lived, among the other Gods."

He spake, and straight his lineaments began  
 To fade ; and Nanna in her sleep stretch'd out  
 Her arms towards him with a cry—but he  
 Mournfully shook his head, and disappear'd.  
 And as the woodman sees a little smoke  
 Hang in the air, afield, and disappear,  
 So Balder faded in the night away.  
 And Nanna on her bed sank back ; but then  
 Frea, the mother of the Gods, with stroke  
 Painless and swift, set free her airy soul,  
 Which took, on Balder's track, the way below ;  
 And instantly the sacred morn appear'd.

## 2. JOURNEY TO THE DEAD

FORTH from the east, up the ascent of Heaven,  
 Day drove his courser with the shining mane ;  
 And in Valhalla, from his gable-perch,  
 The golden-crested cock began to crow.  
 Hereafter, in the blackest dead of night,  
 With shrill and dismal cries that bird shall crow,  
 Warning the Gods that foes draw nigh to Heaven :  
 But now he crew at dawn, a cheerful note,  
 To wake the Gods and Heroes to their tasks.  
 And all the Gods, and all the Heroes, woke.  
 And from their beds the Heroes rose, and donn'd  
 Their arms, and led their horses from the stall,  
 And mounted them, and in Valhalla's court

Were ranged ; and then the daily fray began.  
 And all day long they there are hack'd and hewn,  
 'Mid dust, and groans, and limbs lopp'd off, and blood ;  
 But all at night return to Odin's hall,  
 Woundless and fresh ; such lot is theirs in Heaven.  
 And the Valkyries on their steeds went forth  
 Tow'rd earth and fights of men ; and at their side  
 Skulda, the youngest of the Nornies, rode ;  
 And over Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
 Past Midgard fortress, down to earth they came ;  
 There through some battle-field, where men fall fast,  
 Their horses fetlock-deep in blood, they ride,  
 And pick the bravest warriors out for death,  
 Whom they bring back with them at night to Heaven  
 To glad the Gods, and feast in Odin's hall.

But the Gods went not now, as otherwhile,  
 Into the tilt-yard, where the Heroes fought,  
 To feast their eyes with looking on the fray ;  
 Nor did they to their judgment-place repair  
 By the ash Igdrasil, in Ida's plain,  
 Where they hold council, and give laws for men.  
 But they went, Odin first, the rest behind,  
 To the hall Gladheim, which is built of gold ;  
 Where are in circle ranged twelve golden chairs,  
 And in the midst one higher, Odin's throne.  
 There all the Gods in silence sate them down ;  
 And thus the Father of the ages spake :—

“Go quickly, Gods, bring wood to the seashore,  
 With all, which it beseems the dead to have,  
 And make a funeral-pile on Balder's ship ;  
 On the twelfth day the Gods shall burn his corpse.  
 But Hermod, thou, take Sleipner, and ride down  
 To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back.”



So said he ; and the Gods arose, and took  
Axes and ropes, and at their head came Thor,  
Shouldering his hammer, which the giants know.  
Forth wended they, and drave their steeds before.  
And up the dewy mountain-tracks they fared  
To the dark forests, in the early dawn ;  
And up and down, and side and slant they roam'd.  
And from the glens all day an echo came  
Of crashing falls ; for with his hammer Thor  
Smote 'mid the rocks the lichen-bearded pines,  
And burst their roots, while to their tops the Gods  
Made fast the woven ropes, and haled them down,  
And lopp'd their boughs, and clove them on the sward,  
And bound the logs behind their steeds to draw,  
And drave them homeward ; and the snorting steeds  
Went straining through the crackling brushwood down,  
And by the darkling forest-paths the Gods  
Follow'd, and on their shoulders carried boughs.  
And they came out upon the plain, and pass'd  
Asgard, and led their horses to the beach,  
And loosed them of their loads on the seashore,  
And ranged the wood in stacks by Balder's ship ;  
And every God went home to his own house.

But when the Gods were to the forest gone,  
Hermod led Sleipner from Valhalla forth  
And saddled him ; before that, Sleipner brook'd  
No meaner hand than Odin's on his mane,  
On his broad back no lesser rider bore ;  
Yet docile now he stood at Hermod's side,  
Arching his neck, and glad to be bestrode,  
Knowing the God they went to seek, how dear.  
But Hermod mounted him, and sadly fared  
In silence up the dark untravell'd road

Which branches from the north of Heaven, and went  
 All day ; and daylight waned, and night came on.  
 And all that night he rode, and journey'd so,  
 Nine days, nine nights, toward the northern ice,  
 Through valleys deep-engulph'd, by roaring streams.  
 And on the tenth morn he beheld the bridge  
 Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,  
 And on the bridge a damsel watching arm'd,  
 In the strait passage, at the farther end,  
 Where the road issues between walling rocks.  
 Scant space that warder left for passers by ;—  
 But as when cowherds in October drive  
 Their kine across a snowy mountain-pass  
 To winter-pasture on the southern side,  
 And on the ridge a waggon chokes the way,  
 Wedged in the snow ; then painfully the hinds  
 With goad and shouting urge their cattle past,  
 Plunging through deep untrodden banks of snow  
 To right and left, and warm steam fills the air—  
 So on the bridge that damsel block'd the way,  
 And question'd Hermod as he came, and said :—

“ Who art thou on thy black and fiery horse  
 Under whose hoofs the bridge o'er Giall's stream  
 Rumbles and shakes? Tell me thy race and home.  
 But yestermorn, five troops of dead pass'd by,  
 Bound on their way below to Hela's realm,  
 Nor shook the bridge so much as thou alone.  
 And thou hast flesh and colour on thy cheeks,  
 Like men who live, and draw the vital air ;  
 Nor look'st thou pale and wan, like men deceased,  
 Souls bound below, my daily passers here.”

And the fleet-footed Hermod answer'd her :—  
 “ O damsel, Hermod am I call'd, the son

Of Odin ; and my high-roof'd house is built  
Far hence, in Asgard, in the city of Gods ;  
And Sleipner, Odin's horse, is this I ride.  
And I come, sent this road on Balder's track ;  
Say then, if he hath cross'd thy bridge or no ?”

He spake ; the warder of the bridge replied :—  
“ O Hermod, rarely do the feet of Gods  
Or of the horses of the Gods resound  
Upon my bridge ; and, when they cross, I know.  
Balder hath gone this way, and ta'en the road  
Below there, to the north, tow'rd Hela's realm.  
From here the cold white mist can be discern'd,  
Nor lit with sun, but through the darksome air  
By the dim vapour-blotted light of stars,  
Which hangs over the ice where lies the road.  
For in that ice are lost those northern streams,  
Freezing and ridging in their onward flow,  
Which from the fountain of Vergelmer run,  
The spring that bubbles up by Hela's throne.  
There are the joyless seats, the haunt of ghosts,  
Hela's pale swarms ; and there was Balder bound.  
Ride on ! pass free ! but he by this is there.”

She spake, and stepp'd aside, and left him room,  
And Hermod greeted her, and gallop'd by  
Across the bridge ; then she took post again.  
But northward Hermod rode, the way below ;  
And o'er a darksome tract, which knows no sun,  
But by the blotted light of stars, he fared.  
And he came down to Ocean's northern strand,  
At the drear ice, beyond the giants' home.  
Thence on he journey'd o'er the fields of ice  
Still north, until he met a stretching wall  
Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.

Then he dismounted, and drew tight the girths,  
 On the smooth ice, of Sleipner, Odin's horse,  
 And made him leap the grate, and came within.  
 And he beheld spread round him Hela's realm,  
 The plains of Niflheim, where dwell the dead,  
 And heard the thunder of the streams of Hell.  
 For near the wall the river of Roaring flows,  
 Outmost ; the others near the centre run—  
 The Storm, the Abyss, the Howling, and the Pain ;  
 These flow by Hela's throne, and near their spring.  
 And from the dark flock'd up the shadowy tribes ;—  
 And as the swallows crowd the bulrush-beds  
 Of some clear river, issuing from a lake,  
 On autumn-days, before they cross the sea ;  
 And to each bulrush-crest a swallow hangs  
 Quivering, and others skim the river-streams,  
 And their quick twittering fills the banks and shores—  
 So around Hermod swarm'd the twittering ghosts.  
 Women, and infants, and young men who died  
 Too soon for fame, with white ungraven shields ;  
 And old men, known to glory, but their star  
 Betray'd them, and of wasting age they died,  
 Not wounds ; yet, dying, they their armour wore,  
 And now have chief regard in Hela's realm.  
 Behind flock'd wrangling up a piteous crew,  
 Greeted of none, disfeatured and forlorn—  
 Cowards, who were in sloughs interr'd alive ;  
 And round them still the wattled hurdles hung,  
 Wherewith they stamp'd them down, and trod them deep,  
 To hide their shameful memory from men.  
 But all he pass'd unhail'd, and reach'd the throne  
 Of Hela, and saw, near it, Balder crown'd,  
 And Hela set thereon, with countenance stern

And thus bespake him first the solemn queen :—

“ Unhappy, how hast thou endured to leave  
The light, and journey to the cheerless land  
Where idly flit about the feeble shades ?  
How didst thou cross the bridge o’er Giall’s stream,  
Being alive, and come to Ocean’s shore ?  
Or how o’erleap the grate that bars the wall ?”

She spake : but down off Sleipner Hermod sprang,  
And fell before her feet, and clasp’d her knees ;  
And spake, and mild entreated her, and said :—

“ O Hela, wherefore should the Gods declare  
Their errands to each other, or the ways  
They go ? the errand and the way is known.  
Thou know’st, thou know’st, what grief we have in Heaven  
For Balder, whom thou hold’st by right below.  
Restore him ! for what part fulfils he here ?  
Shall he shed cheer over the cheerless seats,  
And touch the apathetic ghosts with joy ?  
Not for such end, O queen, thou hold’st thy realm.  
For Heaven was Balder born, the city of Gods  
And Heroes, where they live in light and joy.  
Thither restore him, for his place is there !”

He spoke ; and grave replied the solemn queen :—  
“ Hermod, for he thou art, thou son of Heaven !  
A strange unlikely errand, sure, is thine.  
Do the Gods send to me to make them blest ?  
Small bliss my race hath of the Gods obtained.  
Three mighty children to my father Lok  
Did Angerbode, the giantess, bring forth—  
Fenris the wolf, the Serpent huge, and me.  
Of these the Serpent in the sea ye cast,  
Who since in your despite hath wax’d amain,  
And now with gleaming ring enfolds the world ;

Me on this cheerless nether world ye threw,  
 And gave me nine unlighted realms to rule ;  
 While on his island in the lake afar,  
 Made fast to the bored crag, by wile not strength  
 Subdued, with limber chains lives Fenris bound.  
 Lok still subsists in Heaven, our father wise,  
 Your mate, though loathed, and feasts in Odin's hall ;  
 But him too foes await, and netted snares,  
 And in a cave a bed of needle-rocks,  
 And o'er his visage serpents dropping gall.  
 Yet he shall one day rise, and burst his bonds,  
 And with himself set us his offspring free,  
 When he guides Muspel's children to their bourne.  
 Till then in peril or in pain we live,  
 Wrought by the Gods—and ask the Gods our aid ?  
 Howbeit, we abide our day ; till then,  
 We do not as some feebler haters do—  
 Seek to afflict our foes with petty pangs,  
 Helpless to better us, or ruin them.  
 Come then ! if Balder was so dear beloved,  
 And this is true, and such a loss is Heaven's—  
 Hear, how to Heaven may Balder be restored.  
 Show me through all the world the signs of grief !  
 Fails but one thing to grieve, here Balder stops !  
 Let all that lives and moves upon the earth  
 Weep him, and all that is without life weep ;  
 Let Gods, men, brutes, bewEEP him ; plants and stones !  
 So shall I know the lost was dear indeed,  
 And bend my heart, and give him back to Heaven."

She spake ; and Hermod answer'd her, and said :—  
 " Hela, such as thou say'st, the terms shall be.  
 But come, declare me this, and truly tell :  
 May I, ere I depart, bid Balder hail,

Or is it here withheld to greet the dead ?”

He spake, and straightway Hela answered him :—  
 “ Hermod, greet Balder if thou wilt, and hold  
 Converse ; his speech remains, though he be dead.”

And straight to Balder Hermod turn'd, and spake :—  
 “ Even in the abode of death, O Balder, hail !  
 Thou hear'st, if hearing, like as speech, is thine,  
 The terms of thy releasement hence to Heaven ;  
 Fear nothing but that all shall be fulfill'd.  
 For not unmindful of thee are the Gods,  
 Who see the light, and blest in Asgard dwell ;  
 Even here they seek thee out, in Hela's realm.  
 And sure of all the happiest far art thou  
 Who ever have been known in earth or Heaven ;  
 Alive, thou wast of Gods the most beloved,  
 And now thou sittest crown'd by Hela's side,  
 Here, and hast honour among all the dead.”

He spake ; and Balder utter'd him reply,  
 But feebly, as a voice far off ; he said :—

“ Hermod the nimble, gild me not my death !  
 Better to live a serf, a captured man,  
 Who scatters rushes in a master's hall,  
 Than be a crown'd king here, and rule the dead.  
 And now I count not of these terms as safe  
 To be fulfill'd, nor my return as sure,  
 Though I be loved, and many mourn my death ;  
 For double-minded ever was the seed  
 Of Lok, and double are the gifts they give.  
 Howbeit, report thy message ; and therewith,  
 To Odin, to my father, take this ring,  
 Memorial of me, whether saved or no ;  
 And tell the Heaven-born Gods how thou hast seen  
 Me sitting here below by Hela's side,

Crown'd, having honour among all the dead."

He spake, and raised his hand, and gave the ring.  
 And with inscrutable regard the queen  
 Of Hell beheld them, and the ghosts stood dumb.  
 But Hermod took the ring, and yet once more  
 Kneel'd and did homage to the solemn queen ;  
 Then mounted Sleipner, and set forth to ride  
 Back, through the astonish'd tribes of dead, to Heaven.  
 And to the wall he came, and found the grate  
 Lifted, and issued on the fields of ice.  
 And o'er the ice he fared to Ocean's strand,  
 And up from thence, a wet and misty road,  
 To the arm'd damsel's bridge, and Giall's stream.  
 Worse was that way to go than to return,  
 For him ;—for others all return is barr'd.  
 Nine days he took to go, two to return,  
 And on the twelfth morn saw the light of Heaven.  
 And as a traveller in the early dawn  
 To the steep edge of some great valley comes,  
 Through which a river flows, and sees, beneath,  
 Clouds of white rolling vapours fill the vale,  
 But o'er them, on the farther slope, descries  
 Vineyards, and crofts, and pastures, bright with sun—  
 So Hermod, o'er the fog between, saw Heaven.  
 And Sleipner snorted, for he smelt the air  
 Of Heaven ; and mightily, as wing'd, he flew.  
 And Hermod saw the towers of Asgard rise ;  
 And he drew near, and heard no living voice  
 In Asgard ; and the golden halls were dumb.  
 Then Hermod knew what labour held the Gods ;  
 And through the empty streets he rode, and pass'd  
 Under the gate-house to the sands, and found  
 The Gods on the sea-shore by Balder's ship.



## 3. FUNERAL

THE Gods held talk together, group'd in knots,  
 Round Balder's corpse, which they had thither borne ;  
 And Hermod came down tow'rds them from the gate.  
 And Lok, the father of the serpent, first  
 Beheld him come, and to his neighbour spake :—

“ See, here is Hermod, who comes single back  
 From Hell ; and shall I tell thee how he seems ?  
 Like as a farmer, who hath lost his dog,  
 Some morn, at market, in a crowded town—  
 Through many streets the poor beast runs in vain,  
 And follows this man after that, for hours ;  
 And, late at evening, spent and panting, falls  
 Before a stranger's threshold, not his home,  
 With flanks a-tremble, and his slender tongue  
 Hangs quivering out between his dust-smear'd jaws,  
 And piteously he eyes the passers by ;  
 But home his master comes to his own farm,  
 Far in the country, wondering where he is—  
 So Hermod comes to-day unfollow'd home.”

And straight his neighbour, moved with wrath, replied :—  
 “ Deceiver ! fair in form, but false in heart !  
 Enemy, mocker, whom, though Gods, we hate—  
 Peace, lest our father Odin hear thee gibe !  
 Would I might see him snatch thee in his hand,  
 And bind thy carcase, like a bale, with cords,  
 And hurl thee in a lake, to sink or swim !  
 If clear from plotting Balder's death, to swim ;  
 But deep, if thou devisedst it, to drown,  
 And perish, against fate, before thy day.”

So they two soft to one another spake.  
 But Odin look'd toward the land, and saw

His messenger ; and he stood forth, and cried.  
 And Hermod came, and leapt from Sleipner down,  
 And in his father's hand put Sleipner's rein,  
 And greeted Odin and the Gods, and said :—

“ Odin, my father, and ye, Gods of Heaven !  
 Lo, home, having perform'd your will, I come.  
 Into the joyless kingdom have I been,  
 Below, and look'd upon the shadowy tribes  
 Of ghosts, and communed with their solemn queen ;  
 And to your prayer she sends you this reply :  
*Show her through all the world the signs of grief !  
 Fails but one thing to grieve, there Balder stops !  
 Let Gods, men, brutes, bewep him ; plants and stones :  
 So shall she know your loss was dear indeed,  
 And bend her heart, and give you Balder back.*”

He spoke ; and all the Gods to Odin look'd ;  
 And straight the Father of the ages said :—

“ Ye Gods, these terms may keep another day.  
 But now, put on your arms, and mount your steeds,  
 And in procession all come near, and weep  
 Balder ; for that is what the dead desire.  
 When ye enough have wept, then build a pile  
 Of the heap'd wood, and burn his corpse with fire  
 Out of our sight ; that we may turn from grief,  
 And lead, as erst, our daily life in Heaven.”

He spoke, and the Gods arm'd ; and Odin donn'd  
 His dazzling corslet and his helm of gold,  
 And led the way on Sleipner ; and the rest  
 Follow'd, in tears, their father and their king.  
 And thrice in arms around the dead they rode,  
 Weeping ; the sands were wetted, and their arms,  
 With their thick-falling tears—so good a friend  
 They mourn'd that day, so bright, so loved a God.

And Odin came, and laid his kingly hands  
On Balder's breast, and thus began the wail :—

“Farewell, O Balder, bright and loved, my son !  
In that great day, the twilight of the Gods,  
When Muspel's children shall beleaguer Heaven,  
Then we shall miss thy counsel and thy arm.”

Thou camest near the next, O warrior Thor !  
Shouldering thy hammer, in thy chariot drawn,  
Swaying the long-hair'd goats with silver'd rein ;  
And over Balder's corpse these words didst say :—

“Brother, thou dwellest in the darksome land,  
And talkest with the feeble tribes of ghosts,  
Now, and I know not how they prize thee there—  
But here, I know, thou wilt be miss'd and mourn'd.  
For haughty spirits and high wraths are rife  
Among the Gods and Heroes here in Heaven,  
As among those whose joy and work is war ;  
And daily strifes arise, and angry words.  
But from thy lips, O Balder, night or day,  
Heard no one ever an injurious word  
To God or Hero, but thou keptest back  
The others, labouring to compose their brawls.  
Be ye then kind, as Balder too was kind !  
For we lose him, who smoothed all strife in Heaven.”

He spake, and all the Gods assenting wail'd.  
And Freya next came nigh, with golden tears ;  
The loveliest Goddess she in Heaven, by all  
Most honour'd after Frea, Odin's wife.  
Her long ago the wandering Oder took  
To mate, but left her to roam distant lands ;  
Since then she seeks him, and weeps tears of gold.  
Names hath she many ; Vanadis on earth  
They call her, Freya is her name in Heaven ;

She in her hands took Balder's head, and spake :—

“ Balder, my brother, thou art gone a road  
 Unknown and long, and haply on that way  
 My long-lost wandering Oder thou hast met,  
 For in the paths of Heaven he is not found.  
 Oh, if it be so, tell him what thou wast  
 To his neglected wife, and what he is,  
 And wring his heart with shame, to hear thy word !  
 For he, my husband, left me here to pine,  
 Not long a wife, when his unquiet heart  
 First drove him from me into distant lands ;  
 Since then I vainly seek him through the world,  
 And weep from shore to shore my golden tears,  
 But neither god nor mortal heeds my pain.  
 Thou only, Balder, wast for ever kind,  
 To take my hand, and wipe my tears, and say :  
*Weep not, O Freya, weep no golden tears !  
 One day the wandering Oder will return,  
 Or thou wilt find him in thy faithful search  
 On some great road, or resting in an inn,  
 Or at a ford, or sleeping by a tree.*  
 So Balder said ;—but Oder, well I know,  
 My truant Oder I shall see no more  
 To the world's end ; and Balder now is gone,  
 And I am left uncomforted in Heaven.”

She spake ; and all the Goddesses bewail'd.  
 Last from among the Heroes one came near,  
 No God, but of the hero-troop the chief—  
 Regner, who swept the northern sea with fleets,  
 And ruled o'er Denmark and the heathy isles,  
 Living ; but Ella captured him and slew ;—  
 A king whose fame then fill'd the vast of Heaven,  
 Now time obscures it, and men's later deeds.

He last approach'd the corpse, and spake, and said :—

“ Balder, there yet are many Scalds in Heaven  
Still left, and that chief Scald, thy brother Brage,  
Whom we may bid to sing, though thou art gone.  
And all these gladly, while we drink, we hear,  
After the feast is done, in Odin's hall ;  
But they harp ever on one string, and wake  
Remembrance in our soul of wars alone,  
Such as on earth we valiantly have waged,  
And blood, and ringing blows, and violent death.  
But when thou sangest, Balder, thou didst strike  
Another note, and, like a bird in spring,  
Thy voice of joyance minded us, and youth,  
And wife, and children, and our ancient home.  
Yes, and I, too, remember'd then no more  
My dungeon, where the serpents stung me dead,  
Nor Ella's victory on the English coast—  
But I heard Thora laugh in Gothland Isle,  
And saw my shepherdess, Aslauga, tend  
Her flock along the white Norwegian beach.  
Tears started to mine eyes with yearning joy.  
Therefore with grateful heart I mourn thee dead.”

So Regner spake, and all the Heroes groan'd.  
But now the sun had pass'd the height of Heaven,  
And soon had all that day been spent in wail ;  
But then the Father of the ages said :—

“ Ye Gods, there well may be too much of wail !  
Bring now the gather'd wood to Balder's ship ;  
Heap on the deck the logs, and build the pyre.”

But when the Gods and Heroes heard, they brought  
The wood to Balder's ship, and built a pile,  
Full the deck's breadth, and lofty ; then the corpse  
Of Balder on the highest top they laid,

With Nanna on his right, and on his left  
Hoder, his brother, whom his own hand slew.  
And they set jars of wine and oil to lean  
Against the bodies, and stuck torches near,  
Splinters of pine-wood, soak'd with turpentine ;  
And brought his arms and gold, and all his stuff,  
And slew the dogs who at his table fed,  
And his horse, Balder's horse, whom most he loved,  
And placed them on the pyre, and Odin threw  
A last choice gift thereon, his golden ring.  
The mast they fixt, and hoisted up the sails,  
Then they put fire to the wood ; and Thor  
Set his stout shoulder hard against the stern  
To push the ship through the thick sand ;—sparks flew  
From the deep trench she plough'd, so strong a God  
Furrow'd it ; and the water gurgled in.  
And the ship floated on the waves, and rock'd.  
But in the hills a strong east-wind arose,  
And came down moaning to the sea ; first squalls  
Ran black o'er the sea's face, then steady rush'd  
The breeze, and fill'd the sails, and blew the fire.  
And wreathed in smoke the ship stood out to sea.  
Soon with a roaring rose the mighty fire,  
And the pile crackled ; and between the logs  
Sharp quivering tongues of flame shot out, and leapt,  
Curling and darting, higher, until they lick'd  
The summit of the pile, the dead, the mast,  
And ate the shrivelling sails ; but still the ship  
Drove on, ablaze above her hull with fire.  
And the Gods stood upon the beach, and gazed.  
And while they gazed, the sun went lurid down  
Into the smoke-wrapt sea, and night came on.  
Then the wind fell, with night, and there was calm ;

But through the dark they watch'd the burning ship  
Still carried o'er the distant waters on,  
Farther and farther, like an eye of fire.  
And long, in the far dark, blazed Balder's pile ;  
But fainter, as the stars rose high, it flared,  
The bodies were consumed, ash choked the pile.  
And as, in a decaying winter-fire,  
A charr'd log, falling, makes a shower of sparks—  
So with a shower of sparks the pile fell in,  
Reddening the sea around ; and all was dark.

But the Gods went by starlight up the shore  
To Asgard, and sate down in Odin's hall  
At table, and the funeral-feast began.  
All night they ate the boar Serimner's flesh,  
And from their horns, with silver rimm'd, drank mead,  
Silent, and waited for the sacred morn.

And morning over all the world was spread.  
Then from their loathéd feasts the Gods arose,  
And took their horses, and set forth to ride  
O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
To the ash Igdrasil, and Ida's plain ;  
Thor came on foot, the rest on horseback rode.  
And they found Mimir sitting by his fount  
Of wisdom, which beneath the ashtree springs ;  
And saw the Nornies watering the roots  
Of that world-shadowing tree with honey-dew.  
There came the Gods, and sate them down on stones ;  
And thus the Father of the ages said :—

“Ye Gods, the terms ye know, which Hermod brought.  
Accept them or reject them ! both have grounds.  
Accept them, and they bind us, unfulfill'd,  
To leave for ever Balder in the grave,  
An unrecover'd prisoner, shade with shades.

But how, ye say, should the fulfilment fail?—  
 Smooth sound the terms, and light to be fulfill'd ;  
 For dear-beloved was Balder while he lived  
 In Heaven and earth, and who would grudge him tears ?  
 But from the traitorous seed of Lok they come,  
 These terms, and I suspect some hidden fraud.  
 Bethink ye, Gods, is there no other way?—  
 Speak, were not this a way, the way for Gods?  
 If I, if Odin, clad in radiant arms,  
 Mounted on Sleipner, with the warrior Thor  
 Drawn in his car beside me, and my sons,  
 All the strong brood of Heaven, to swell my train,  
 Should make irruption into Hela's realm,  
 And set the fields of gloom ablaze with light,  
 And bring in triumph Balder back to Heaven?"

He spake, and his fierce sons applauded loud.  
 But Frea, mother of the Gods, arose,  
 Daughter and wife of Odin ; thus she said :—

“Odin, thou whirlwind, what a threat is this !  
 Thou threatenest what transcends thy might, even thine.  
 For of all powers the mightiest far art thou,  
 Lord over men on earth, and Gods in Heaven ;  
 Yet even from thee thyself hath been withheld  
 One thing—to undo what thou thyself hast ruled.  
 For all which hath been fixt, was fixt by thee.  
 In the beginning, ere the Gods were born,  
 Before the Heavens were builded, thou didst slay  
 The giant Ymir, whom the abyss brought forth,  
 Thou and thy brethren fierce, the sons of Bor,  
 And cast his trunk to choke the abysmal void.  
 But of his flesh and members thou didst build  
 The earth and Ocean, and above them Heaven.  
 And from the flaming world, where Muspel reigns,



Thou sent'st and fetched'st fire, and madest lights,  
Sun, moon, and stars, which thou hast hung in Heaven,  
Dividing clear the paths of night and day.  
And Asgard thou didst build, and Midgard fort ;  
Then me thou mad'st ; of us the Gods were born.  
Last, walking by the sea, thou foundest spars  
Of wood, and framed'st men, who till the earth,  
Or on the sea, the field of pirates, sail.  
And all the race of Ymir thou didst drown,  
Save one, Bergelmer ;—he on shipboard fled  
Thy deluge, and from him the giants sprang.  
But all that brood thou hast removed far off,  
And set by Ocean's utmost marge to dwell ;  
But Hela into Niflheim thou threw'st,  
And gav'st her nine unlighted worlds to rule,  
A queen, and empire over all the dead.  
That empire wilt thou now invade, light up  
Her darkness, from her grasp a subject tear?—  
Try it ; but I, for one, will not applaud.  
Nor do I merit, Odin, thou should'st slight  
Me and my words, though thou be first in Heaven ;  
For I too am a Goddess, born of thee,  
Thine eldest, and of me the Gods are sprung ;  
And all that is to come I know, but lock  
In mine own breast, and have to none reveal'd.  
Come then ! since Hela holds by right her prey,  
But offers terms for his release to Heaven,  
Accept the chance ; thou canst no more obtain.  
Send through the world thy messengers ; entreat  
All living and unliving things to weep  
For Balder ; if thou haply thus may'st melt  
Hela, and win the loved one back to Heaven."

She spake, and on her face let fall her veil,

And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands.  
Nor did the all-ruling Odin slight her word ;  
Straightway he spake, and thus address'd the Gods :

“Go quickly forth through all the world, and pray  
All living and unliving things to weep  
Balder, if haply he may thus be won.”

When the Gods heard, they straight arose, and took  
Their horses, and rode forth through all the world ;  
North, south, east, west, they struck, and roam'd the world,  
Entreating all things to weep Balder's death.  
And all that lived, and all without life, wept.  
And as in winter, when the frost breaks up,  
At winter's end, before the spring begins,  
And a warm west-wind blows, and thaw sets in—  
After an hour a dripping sound is heard  
In all the forests, and the soft-strewn snow  
Under the trees is dibbled thick with holes,  
And from the boughs the snowloads shuffle down ;  
And, in fields sloping to the south, dark plots  
Of grass peep out amid surrounding snow,  
And widen, and the peasant's heart is glad—  
So through the world was heard a dripping noise  
Of all things weeping to bring Balder back ;  
And there fell joy upon the Gods to hear.

But Hermod rode with Niord, whom he took  
To show him spits and beaches of the sea  
Far off, where some unwarn'd might fail to weep—  
Niord, the God of storms, whom fishers know ;  
Not born in Heaven ; he was in Vanheim rear'd,  
With men, but lives a hostage with the Gods ;  
He knows each frith, and every rocky creek  
Fringed with dark pines, and sands where seafowl scream—  
They two scour'd every coast, and all things wept.

And they rode home together, through the wood  
Of Jarnvid, which to east of Midgard lies  
Bordering the giants, where the trees are iron ;  
There in the wood before a cave they came,  
Where sate, in the cave's mouth, a skinny hag,  
Toothless and old ; she gibes the passers by.  
Thok is she call'd, but now Lok wore her shape ;  
She greeted them the first, and laugh'd, and said :—

“ Ye Gods, good lack, is it so dull in Heaven,  
That ye come pleasuring to Thok's iron wood ?  
Lovers of change ye are, fastidious sprites.  
Look, as in some boor's yard a sweet-breath'd cow,  
Whose manger is stuff'd full of good fresh hay,  
Snuffs at it daintily, and stoops her head  
To chew the straw, her litter, at her feet—  
So ye grow squeamish, Gods, and sniff at Heaven !”

She spake ; but Hermod answer'd her and said :—  
“ Thok, not for gibes we come, we come for tears.  
Balder is dead, and Hela holds her prey,  
But will restore, if all things give him tears.  
Begrudge not thine ! to all was Balder dear.”

Then, with a louder laugh, the hag replied :—  
“ Is Balder dead ? and do ye come for tears ?  
Thok with dry eyes will weep o'er Balder's pyre.  
Weep him all other things, if weep they will—  
I weep him not ! let Hela keep her prey.”

She spake, and to the cavern's depth she fled,  
Mocking ; and Hermod knew their toil was vain.  
And as seafaring men, who long have wrought  
In the great deep for gain, at last come home,  
And towards evening see the headlands rise  
Of their dear country, and can plain descry  
A fire of wither'd furze which boys have lit

Upon the cliffs, or smoke of burning weeds  
 Out of a till'd field inland ;—then the wind  
 Catches them, and drives out again to sea ;  
 And they go long days tossing up and down  
 Over the grey sea-ridges, and the glimpse  
 Of port they had makes bitterer far their toil—  
 So the Gods' cross was bitterer for their joy.

Then, sad at heart, to Niord Hermod spake :—  
 “ It is the accuser Lok, who flouts us all !  
 Ride back, and tell in Heaven this heavy news ;  
 I must again below, to Hela's realm.”

He spoke ; and Niord set forth back to Heaven.  
 But northward Hermod rode, the way below,  
 The way he knew ; and traversed Giall's stream,  
 And down to Ocean groped, and cross'd the ice,  
 And came beneath the wall, and found the grate  
 Still lifted ; well was his return foreknown.

And once more Hermod saw around him spread  
 The joyless plains, and heard the streams of Hell.  
 But as he enter'd, on the extremest bound  
 Of Niflheim, he saw one ghost come near,  
 Hovering, and stopping oft, as if afraid—  
 Hoder, the unhappy, whom his own hand slew.  
 And Hermod look'd, and knew his brother's ghost,  
 And call'd him by his name, and sternly said :—

“ Hoder, ill-fated, blind in heart and eyes !  
 Why tarriest thou to plunge thee in the gulph  
 Of the deep inner gloom, but flittest here,  
 In twilight, on the lonely verge of Hell,  
 Far from the other ghosts, and Hela's throne ?  
 Doubtless thou fearest to meet Balder's voice,  
 Thy brother, whom through folly thou didst slay.”

He spoke ; but Hoder answer'd him, and said :—

“Hermod the nimble, dost thou still pursue  
 The unhappy with reproach, even in the grave?  
 For this I died, and fled beneath the gloom,  
 Not daily to endure abhorring Gods,  
 Nor with a hateful presence cumber Heaven;  
 And canst thou not, even here, pass pitying by?  
 No less than Balder have I lost the light  
 Of Heaven, and communion with my kin;  
 I too had once a wife, and once a child,  
 And substance, and a golden house in Heaven—  
 But all I left of my own act, and fled  
 Below, and dost thou hate me even here?  
 Balder upbraids me not, nor hates at all,  
 Though he has cause, have any cause; but he,  
 When that with downcast looks I hither came,  
 Stretch’d forth his hand, and with benignant voice,  
*Welcome, he said, if there be welcome here,  
 Brother and fellow-sport of Lok with me!*  
 And not to offend thee, Hermod, nor to force  
 My hated converse on thee, came I up  
 From the deep gloom, where I will now return;  
 But earnestly I long’d to hover near,  
 Not too far off, when that thou camest by;  
 To feel the presence of a brother God,  
 And hear the passage of a horse of Heaven,  
 For the last time—for here thou com’st no more.”

He spake, and turn’d to go to the inner gloom.  
 But Hermod stay’d him with mild words, and said:—

“Thou doest well to chide me, Hoder blind!  
 Truly thou say’st, the planning guilty mind  
 Was Lok’s; the unwitting hand alone was thine.  
 But Gods are like the sons of men in this—  
 When they have woe, they blame the nearest cause.

Howbeit stay, and be appeas'd ! and tell :  
Sits Balder still in pomp by Hela's side,  
Or is he mingled with the unnumber'd dead ?”

And the blind Hoder answer'd him and spake :—  
“ His place of state remains by Hela's side,  
But empty ; for his wife, for Nanna came  
Lately below, and join'd him ; and the pair  
Frequent the still recesses of the realm  
Of Hela, and hold converse undisturb'd.  
But they too, doubtless, will have breathed the balm,  
Which floats before a visitant from Heaven,  
And have drawn upward to this verge of Hell.”

He spake ; and, as he ceased, a puff of wind  
Roll'd heavily the leaden mist aside  
Round where they stood, and they beheld two forms  
Make toward them o'er the stretching cloudy plain.  
And Hermod straight perceived them, who they were  
Balder and Nanna ; and to Balder said :—

“ Balder, too truly thou foresaw'st a snare !  
Lok triumphs still, and Hela keeps her prey.  
No more to Asgard shalt thou come, nor lodge  
In thy own house, Breidablik, nor enjoy  
The love all bear toward thee, nor train up  
Forset, thy son, to be beloved like thee.  
Here must thou lie, and wait an endless age.  
Therefore for the last time, O Balder, hail !”

He spake ; and Balder answer'd him, and said :—  
“ Hail and farewell ! for here thou com'st no more.  
Yet mourn not for me, Hermod, when thou sitt'st  
In Heaven, nor let the other Gods lament,  
As wholly to be pitied, quite forlorn.  
For Nanna hath rejoin'd me, who, of old,  
In Heaven, was seldom parted from my side ;

And still the acceptance follows me, which crown'd  
 My former life, and cheers me even here.  
 The iron frown of Hela is relax'd  
 When I draw nigh, and the wan tribes of dead  
 Love me, and gladly bring for my award  
 Their ineffectual feuds and feeble hates—  
 Shadows of hates, but they distress them still."

And the fleet-footed Hermod made reply :—  
 "Thou hast then all the solace death allows,  
 Esteem and function ; and so far is well.  
 Yet here thou liest, Balder, underground,  
 Rusting for ever ; and the years roll on,  
 The generations pass, the ages grow,  
 And bring us nearer to the final day  
 When from the south shall march the fiery band  
 And cross the bridge of Heaven, with Lok for guide,  
 And Fenris at his heel with broken chain ;  
 While from the east the giant Rymer steers  
 His ship, and the great serpent makes to land ;  
 And all are marshall'd in one flaming square  
 Against the Gods, upon the plains of Heaven,  
 I mourn thee, that thou canst not help us then."

He spake ; but Balder answer'd him, and said :—  
 "Mourn not for me ! Mourn, Hermod, for the Gods ;  
 Mourn for the men on earth, the Gods in Heaven,  
 Who live, and with their eyes shall see that day !  
 The day will come, when fall shall Asgard's towers,  
 And Odin, and his sons, the seed of Heaven ;  
 But what were I, to save them in that hour ?  
 If strength might save them, could not Odin save,  
 My father, and his pride, the warrior Thor,  
 Vidar the silent, the impetuous Tyr ?  
 I, what were I, when these can nought avail ?

Yet, doubtless, when the day of battle comes,  
 And the two hosts are marshall'd, and in Heaven  
 The golden-crested cock shall sound alarm,  
 And his black brother-bird from hence reply,  
 And bucklers clash, and spears begin to pour—  
 Longing will stir within my breast, though vain.  
 But not to me so grievous, as, I know,  
 To other Gods it were, is my enforced  
 Absence from fields where I could nothing aid ;  
 For I am long since weary of your storm  
 Of carnage, and find, Hermod, in your life  
 Something too much of war and broils, which make  
 Life one perpetual fight, a bath of blood.  
 Mine eyes are dizzy with the arrowy hail ;  
 Mine ears are stunn'd with blows, and sick for calm.  
 Inactive therefore let me lie, in gloom,  
 Unarm'd, inglorious ; I attend the course  
 Of ages, and my late return to light,  
 In times less alien to a spirit mild,  
 In new-recover'd seats, the happier day."

He spake ; and the fleet Hermod thus replied :—  
 " Brother, what seats are these, what happier day ?  
 Tell me, that I may ponder it when gone."

And the ray-crowned Balder answer'd him :—  
 " Far to the south, beyond the blue, there spreads  
 Another Heaven, the boundless—no one yet  
 Hath reach'd it ; there hereafter shall arise  
 The second Asgard, with another name.  
 Thither, when o'er this present earth and Heavens  
 The tempest of the latter days hath swept,  
 And they from sight have disappear'd, and sunk,  
 Shall a small remnant of the Gods repair ;  
 Hoder and I shall join them from the grave.



There re-assembling we shall see emerge  
 From the bright Ocean at our feet an earth  
 More fresh, more verdant than the last, with fruits  
 Self-springing, and a seed of man preserved,  
 Who then shall live in peace, as now in war.  
 But we in Heaven shall find again with joy  
 The ruin'd palaces of Odin, seats  
 Familiar, halls where we have supp'd of old ;  
 Re-enter them with wonder, never fill  
 Our eyes with gazing, and rebuild with tears.  
 And we shall tread once more the well-known plain  
 Of Ida, and among the grass shall find  
 The golden dice wherewith we play'd of yore ;  
 And that will bring to mind the former life  
 And pastime of the Gods, the wise discourse  
 Of Odin, the delights of other days,  
 O Hermod, pray that thou may'st join us then !  
 Such for the future is my hope ; meanwhile,  
 I rest the thrall of Hela, and endure  
 Death, and the gloom which round me even now  
 Thickens, and to its inner gulph recalls.  
 Farewell, for longer speech is not allow'd !”

He spoke, and waved farewell, and gave his hand  
 To Nanna ; and she gave their brother blind  
 Her hand, in turn, for guidance ; and the three  
 Departed o'er the cloudy plain, and soon  
 Faded from sight into the interior gloom.  
 But Hermod stood beside his drooping horse,  
 Mute, gazing after them in tears ; and fain,  
 Fain had he follow'd their receding steps,  
 Though they to death were bound, and he to Heaven,  
 Then ; but a power he could not break withheld.  
 And as a stork which idle boys have trapp'd,

And tied him in a yard, at autumn sees  
 Flocks of his kind pass flying o'er his head  
 To warmer lands, and coasts that keep the sun ;—  
 He strains to join their flight, and from his shed  
 Follows them with a long complaining cry—  
 So Hermod gazed, and yearn'd to join his kin.

At last he sigh'd, and set forth back to Heaven.

## TRISTRAM AND ISEULT <sup>s</sup>

### I

*Tristram*

*Tristram*

Is she not come? The messenger was sure.  
 Prop me upon the pillows once again—  
 Raise me, my page! this cannot long endure.  
 —Christ, what a night! how the sleet whips the pane!  
 What lights will those out to the northward be?

*The Page*

The lanterns of the fishing-boats at sea.

*Tristram*

Soft—who is that, stands by the dying fire?

*The Page*

Iseult.

*Tristram*

Ah! not the Iseult I desire.

\* \* \* \*

What Knight is this so weak and pale,  
Though the locks are yet brown on his noble head,  
Propt on pillows in his bed,  
Gazing seaward for the light  
Of some ship that fights the gale  
On this wild December night?  
Over the sick man's feet is spread  
A dark green forest-dress ;  
A gold harp leans against the bed,  
Ruddy in the fire's light.  
I know him by his harp of gold,  
Famous in Arthur's court of old ;  
I know him by his forest-dress—  
The peerless hunter, harper, knight,  
Tristram of Lyonesse.

What Lady is this, whose silk attire  
Gleams so rich in the light of the fire?  
The ringlets on her shoulders lying  
In their flitting lustre vying  
With the clasp of burnish'd gold  
Which her heavy robe doth hold.  
Her looks are mild, her fingers slight  
As the driven snow are white ;  
But her cheeks are sunk and pale.  
Is it that the bleak sea-gale  
Beating from the Atlantic sea  
On this coast of Brittany,  
Nips too keenly the sweet flower?  
Is it that a deep fatigue  
Hath come on her, a chilly fear,  
Passing all her youthful hour  
Spinning with her maidens here,

Listlessly through the window-bars  
 Gazing seawards many a league,  
 From her lonely shore-built tower,  
 While the knights are at the wars?  
 Or, perhaps, has her young heart  
 Felt already some deeper smart,  
 Of those that in secret the heart-strings rive,  
 Leaving her sunk and pale, though fair?  
 Who is this snowdrop by the sea?—  
 I know her by her mildness rare,  
 Her snow-white hands, her golden hair;  
 I know her by her rich silk dress,  
 And her fragile loveliness—  
 The sweetest Christian soul alive,  
 Iseult of Brittany.

Iseult of Brittany?—but where  
 Is that other Iseult fair,  
 That proud, first Iseult, Cornwall's queen?  
 She, whom Tristram's ship of yore  
 From Ireland to Cornwall bore,  
 To Tyntagel, to the side  
 Of King Marc, to be his bride?  
 She who, as they voyaged, quaff'd  
 With Tristram that spiced magic draught,  
 Which since then for ever rolls  
 Through their blood, and binds their souls,  
 Working love, but working teen?—  
 There were two Iseults who did sway  
 Each her hour of Tristram's day;  
 But one possess'd his waning time,  
 The other his resplendent prime.  
 Behold her here, the patient flower,

Who possess'd his darker hour !  
 Iseult of the Snow-White Hand  
 Watches pale by Tristram's bed.  
 She is here who had his gloom,  
 Where art thou who hadst his bloom ?  
 One such kiss as those of yore  
 Might thy dying knight restore !  
 Does the love-draught work no more ?  
 Art thou cold, or false, or dead,  
 Iseult of Ireland ?

\* \* \* \*

Loud howls the wind, sharp patters the rain,  
 And the knight sinks back on his pillows again.  
 He is weak with fever and pain,  
 And his spirit is not clear.  
 Hark ! he mutters in his sleep,  
 As he wanders far from here,  
 Changes place and time of year,  
 And his closéd eye doth sweep  
 O'er some fair unwintry sea,  
 Not this fierce Atlantic deep,  
 While he mutters brokenly :—

*Tristram*

The calm sea shines, loose hang the vessel's sails ;  
 Before us are the sweet green fields of Wales,  
 And overhead the cloudless sky of May.—  
 “ *Ah, would I were in those green fields at play,  
 Not pent on ship-board this delicious day !  
 Tristram, I pray thee, of thy courtesy,  
 Reach me my golden phial stands by thee,  
 But pledge me in it first for courtesy.—*”

Ha ! dost thou start ? are thy lips blanch'd like mine ?  
 Child, 'tis no true draught this, 'tis poison'd wine !  
 Iseult ! . . . .

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*

Ah, sweet angels, let him dream !  
 Keep his eyelids ! let him seem  
 Not this fever-wasted wight  
 Thinn'd and paled before his time,  
 But the brilliant youthful knight  
 In the glory of his prime,  
 Sitting in the gilded barge,  
 At thy side, thou lovely charge,  
 Bending gaily o'er thy hand,  
 Iseult of Ireland !  
 And she too, that princess fair,  
 If her bloom be now less rare,  
 Let her have her youth again—  
 Let her be as she was then !  
 Let her have her proud dark eyes,  
 And her petulant quick replies—  
 Let her sweep her dazzling hand  
 With its gesture of command,  
 And shake back her raven hair  
 With the old imperious air !  
 As of old, so let her be,  
 That first Iseult, princess bright,  
 Chatting with her youthful knight  
 As he steers her o'er the sea,  
 Quitting at her father's will  
 The green isle where she was bred,  
 And her bower in Ireland,  
 For the surge-beat Cornish strand ;

Where the prince whom she must wed  
Dwells on loud Tyntagel's hill,  
High above the sounding sea.  
And that potion rare her mother  
Gave her, that her future lord,  
Gave her, that King Marc and she,  
Might drink it on their marriage-day,  
And for ever love each other—  
Let her, as she sits on board,  
Ah, sweet saints, unwittingly !  
See it shine, and take it up,  
And to Tristram laughing say :  
“ Sir Tristram, of thy courtesy,  
Pledge me in my golden cup ! ”  
Let them drink it—let their hands  
Tremble, and their cheeks be flame,  
As they feel the fatal bands  
Of a love they dare not name,  
With a wild delicious pain,  
Twine about their hearts again !  
Let the early summer be  
Once more round them, and the sea  
Blue, and o'er its mirror kind  
Let the breath of the May-wind,  
Wandering through their drooping sails,  
Die on the green fields of Wales !  
Let a dream like this restore  
What his eye must see no more !

*Tristram*

Chill blows the wind, the pleasaunce-walks are drear—  
Madcap, what jest was this, to meet me here ?  
Were feet like those made for so wild a way ?

The southern winter-parlour, by my fay,  
 Had been the likeliest trysting-place to-day!  
*“ Tristram !—nay, nay—thou must not take my hand !—  
 Tristram !—sweet love !—we are betray’d—out-plann’d.  
 Fly—save thyself—save me !—I dare not stay.”—*  
 One last kiss first !—“ *’Tis vain—to horse—away !*”

\*             \*             \*             \*

Ah ! sweet saints, his dream doth move  
 Faster surely than it should,  
 From the fever in his blood !  
 All the spring-time of his love  
 Is already gone and past,  
 And instead thereof is seen  
 Its winter, which endureth still—  
 Tyntagel on its surge-beat hill,  
 The pleasaunce-walks, the weeping queen,  
 The flying leaves, the straining blast,  
 And that long, wild kiss—their last.  
 And this rough December-night,  
 And his burning fever-pain,  
 Mingle with his hurrying dream,  
 Till they rule it, till he seem  
 The press’d fugitive again,  
 The love-desperate banish’d knight  
 With a fire in his brain  
 Flying o’er the stormy main.  
 —Whither does he wander now ?  
 Haply in his dreams the wind  
 Wafts him here, and lets him find  
 The lovely orphan child again  
 In her castle by the coast ;  
 The youngest, fairest chatelaine,



Whom this realm of France can boast,  
Our snowdrop by the Atlantic sea,  
Iseult of Brittany.  
And—for through the haggard air,  
The stain'd arms, the matted hair  
Of that stranger-knight ill-starr'd,  
There gleam'd something, which recall'd  
The Tristram who in better days  
Was Launcelot's guest at Joyous Gard—  
Welcomed here, and here install'd,  
Tended of his fever here,  
Haply he seems again to move  
His young guardian's heart with love ;  
In his exiled loneliness,  
In his stately, deep distress,  
Without a word, without a tear.  
—Ah ! 'tis well he should retrace  
His tranquil life in this lone place ;  
His gentle bearing at the side  
Of his timid youthful bride ;  
His long rambles by the shore  
On winter-evenings, when the roar  
Of the near waves came, sadly grand,  
Through the dark, up the drown'd sand,  
Or his endless reveries  
In the woods, where the gleams play  
On the grass under the trees,  
Passing the long summer's day  
Idle as a mossy stone  
In the forest-depths alone,  
The chase neglected, and his hound  
Couch'd beside him on the ground.  
—Ah ! what trouble 's on his brow ?

Hither let him wander now ;  
 Hither, to the quiet hours  
 Pass'd among these heaths of ours  
 By the grey Atlantic sea ;  
 Hours, if not of ecstasy,  
 From violent anguish surely free !

*Tristram*

All red with blood the whirling river flows,  
 The wide plain rings, the dazed air throbs with blows.  
 Upon us are the chivalry of Rome—  
 Their spears are down, their steeds are bathed in foam.  
 “Up, Tristram, up,” men cry, “thou moonstruck knight !  
 What foul fiend rides thee? On into the fight !”  
 —Above the din her voice is in my ears ;  
 I see her form glide through the crossing spears.—  
 Iseult ! . . .

\* \* \* \*

Ah ! he wanders forth again ;  
 We cannot keep him ; now, as then,  
 There 's a secret in his breast  
 Which will never let him rest.  
 These musing fits in the green wood  
 They cloud the brain, they dull the blood !  
 —His sword is sharp, his horse is good ;  
 Beyond the mountains will he see  
 The famous towns of Italy,  
 And label with the blessed sign  
 The heathen Saxons on the Rhine.  
 At Arthur's side he fights once more  
 With the Roman Emperor.

There's many a gay knight where he goes  
Will help him to forget his care ;  
The march, the leaguer, Heaven's blithe air,  
The neighing steeds, the ringing blows—  
Sick pining comes not where these are.  
Ah ! what boots it, that the jest  
Lightens every other brow,  
What, that every other breast  
Dances as the trumpets blow,  
If one's own heart beats not light  
On the waves of the toss'd fight,  
If oneself cannot get free  
From the clog of misery ?  
Thy lovely youthful wife grows pale  
Watching by the salt sea-tide  
With her children at her side  
For the gleam of thy white sail.  
Home, Tristram, to thy halls again !  
To our lonely sea complain,  
To our forests tell thy pain !

*Tristram*

All round the forest sweeps off, black in shade,  
But it is moonlight in the open glade ;  
And in the bottom of the glade shine clear  
The forest-chapel and the fountain near.  
—I think, I have a fever in my blood ;  
Come, let me leave the shadow of this wood,  
Ride down, and bathe my hot brow in the flood.  
—Mild shines the cold spring in the moon's clear light ;  
God ! 'tis *her* face plays in the waters bright.  
“ Fair love,” she says, “ canst thou forget so soon,

At this soft hour, under this sweet moon? ”—  
Iseult ! . . .

\* \* \* \*

Ah, poor soul ! if this be so,  
Only death can balm thy woe.  
The solitudes of the green wood  
Had no medicine for thy mood ;  
The rushing battle clear'd thy blood  
As little as did solitude.  
—Ah ! his eyelids slowly break  
Their hot seals, and let him wake ;  
What new change shall we now see ?  
A happier ? Worse it cannot be.

*Tristram*

Is my page here ? Come, turn me to the fire !  
Upon the window-panes the moon shines bright ;  
The wind is down—but she'll not come to-night.  
Ah no ! she is asleep in Cornwall now,  
Far hence ; her dreams are fair—smooth is her brow  
Of me she recks not, nor my vain desire.  
—I have had dreams, I have had dreams, my page,  
Would take a score years from a strong man's age ;  
And with a blood like mine, will leave, I fear,  
Scant leisure for a second messenger.  
—My princess, art thou there ? Sweet, do not wait !  
To bed, and sleep ! my fever is gone by ;  
To-night my page shall keep me company.  
Where do the children sleep ? kiss them for me !  
Poor child, thou art almost as pale as I ;  
This comes of nursing long and watching late.  
To bed—good night !

\* \* \* \*

She left the gleam-lit fireplace,  
She came to the bed-side ;  
She took his hands in hers—her tears  
Down on his wasted fingers rain'd.  
She raised her eyes upon his face—  
Not with a look of wounded pride,  
A look as if the heart complained—  
Her look was like a sad embrace ;  
The gaze of one who can divine  
A grief, and sympathise.  
Sweet flower ! thy children's eyes  
Are not more innocent than thine.

But they sleep in shelter'd rest,  
Like helpless birds in the warm nest,  
On the castle's southern side ;  
Where feebly comes the mournful roar  
Of buffeting wind and surging tide  
Through many a room and corridor.  
—Full on their window the moon's ray  
Makes their chamber as bright as day.  
It shines upon the blank white walls,  
And on the snowy pillow falls,  
And on two angel-heads doth play  
Turn'd to each other—the eyes closed,  
The lashes on the cheeks reposed.  
Round each sweet brow the cap close-set  
Hardly lets peep the golden hair ;  
Through the soft-open'd lips the air  
Scarcely moves the coverlet.  
One little wandering arm is thrown  
At random on the counterpane,  
And often the fingers close in haste  
As if their baby-owner chased

The butterflies again.  
 This stir they have, and this alone ;  
 But else they are so still !  
 —Ah, tired madcaps ! you lie still ;  
 But were you at the window now,  
 To look forth on the fairy sight  
 Of your illumined haunts by night,  
 To see the park-glades where you play  
 Far lovelier than they are by day,  
 To see the sparkle on the eaves,  
 And upon every giant-bough  
 Of those old oaks, whose wet red leaves  
 Are jewell'd with bright drops of rain—  
 How would your voices run again !  
 And far beyond the sparkling trees  
 Of the castle-park one sees  
 The bare heaths spreading, clear as day,  
 Moor behind moor, far, far away,  
 Into the heart of Brittany.  
 And here and there, lock'd by the land,  
 Long inlets of smooth glittering sea,  
 And many a stretch of watery sand  
 All shining in the white moon-beams—  
 But you see fairer in your dreams !

What voices are these on the clear night-air ?  
 What lights in the court—what steps on the stair ?

## II

### Escult of Ireland

#### *Tristram*

RAISE the light, my page ! that I may see her.—  
 Thou art come at last, then, haughty Queen !

Long I've waited, long I've fought my fever ;  
 Late thou comest, cruel thou hast been.

*Iseult*

Blame me not, poor sufferer ! that I tarried ;  
 Bound I was, I could not break the band.  
 Chide not with the past, but feel the present !  
 I am here—we meet—I hold thy hand.

*Tristram*

Thou art come, indeed—thou hast rejoin'd me ;  
 Thou hast dared it—but too late to save.  
 Fear not now that men should tax thine honour !  
 I am dying : build—(thou may'st)—my grave !

*Iseult*

Tristram, ah, for love of Heaven, speak kindly !  
 What, I hear these bitter words from thee ?  
 Sick with grief I am, and faint with travel—  
 Take my hand—dear Tristram, look on me !

*Tristram*

I forgot, thou comest from thy voyage—  
 Yes, the spray is on thy cloak and hair.  
 But thy dark eyes are not dimm'd, proud Iseult !  
 And thy beauty never was more fair.

*Iseult*

Ah, harsh flatterer ! let alone my beauty !  
 I, like thee, have left my youth afar.  
 Take my hand, and touch these wasted fingers—  
 See my cheek and lips, how white they are !

*Tristram*

Thou art paler—but thy sweet charm, Iseult !  
 Would not fade with the dull years away.  
 Ah, how fair thou standest in the moonlight !  
 I forgive thee, Iseult !—thou wilt stay ?

*Iseult*

Fear me not, I will be always with thee ;  
 I will watch thee, tend thee, soothe thy pain ;  
 Sing thee tales of true, long-parted lovers,  
 Join'd at evening of their days again.

*Tristram*

No, thou shalt not speak ! I should be finding  
 Something alter'd in thy courtly tone.  
 Sit—sit by me ! I will think, we've lived so  
 In the green wood, all our lives, alone.

*Iseult*

Alter'd, Tristram ? Not in courts, believe me,  
 Love like mine is alter'd in the breast ;  
 Courtly life is light and cannot reach it—  
 Ah ! it lives, because so deep-suppress'd !

What, thou think'st men speak in courtly chambers  
 Words by which the wretched are consoled ?  
 What, thou think'st this aching brow was cooler,  
 Circled, Tristram, by a band of gold ?  
 Royal state with Marc, my deep-wrong'd husband—  
 That was bliss to make my sorrows flee !  
 Silken courtiers whispering honied nothings—  
 Those were friends to make me false to thee !



Ah, on which, if both our lots were balanced,  
 Was indeed the heaviest burden thrown—  
 Thee, a pining exile in thy forest,  
 Me, a smiling queen upon my throne?

Vain and strange debate, where both have suffer'd  
 Both have pass'd a youth consumed and sad,  
 Both have brought their anxious day to evening,  
 And have now short space for being glad!

Join'd we are henceforth; nor will thy people,  
 Nor thy younger Iseult take it ill,  
 That a former rival shares her office,  
 When she sees her humbled, pale, and still.

I, a faded watcher by thy pillow,  
 I, a statue on thy chapel-floor,  
 Pour'd in prayer before the Virgin-Mother,  
 Rouse no anger, make no rivals more.

She will cry: "Is this the foe I dreaded?  
 This his idol? this that royal bride?  
 Ah, an hour of health would purge his eyesight!  
 Stay, pale queen! for ever by my side."

Hush, no words! that smile, I see, forgives me.  
 I am now thy nurse, I bid thee sleep.  
 Close thine eyes—this flooding moonlight blinds  
 them!—  
 Nay, all's well again! thou must not weep.

*Tristram*

I am happy! yet I feel, there's something  
 Swells my heart, and takes my breath away.  
 Through a mist I see thee; near—come nearer!  
 Bend—bend down!—I yet have much to say.

*Iseult*

Heaven! his head sinks back upon the pillow—  
 Tristram! Tristram! let thy heart not fail!  
 Call on God and on the holy angels!  
 What, love, courage!—Christ! he is so pale.

*Tristram*

Hush, 'tis vain, I feel my end approaching!  
 This is what my mother said should be,  
 When the fierce pains took her in the forest,  
 The deep draughts of death, in bearing me.  
 “Son,” she said, “thy name shall be of sorrow;  
 Tristram art thou call'd for my death's sake.”  
 So she said, and died in the drear forest.  
 Grief since then his home with me doth make.

I am dying.—Start not, nor look wildly!  
 Me, thy living friend, thou canst not save.  
 But, since living we were ununited,  
 Go not far, O Iseult! from my grave.

Close mine eyes, then seek the princess Iseult;  
 Speak her fair, she is of royal blood!  
 Say, I will'd so, that thou stay beside me—  
 She will grant it; she is kind and good.

Now to sail the seas of death I leave thee—  
 One last kiss upon the living shore!

*Iseult*

Tristram!—Tristram!—stay—receive me with thee!  
 Iseult leaves thee, Tristram! never more.

\* \* \* \*

You see them clear—the moon shines bright.  
Slow, slow and softly, where she stood,  
She sinks upon the ground ;—her hood  
Had fallen back ; her arms outspread  
Still hold her lover's hand ; her head  
Is bow'd, half-buried, on the bed.  
O'er the blanch'd sheet her raven hair  
Lies in disorder'd streams ; and there,  
Strung like white stars, the pearls still are,  
And the golden bracelets, heavy and rare,  
Flash on her white arms still.  
The very same which yesternight  
Flash'd in the silver sconces' light,  
When the feast was gay and the laughter loud  
In Tyntagel's palace proud.  
But then they deck'd a restless ghost  
With hot-flush'd cheeks and brilliant eyes,  
And quivering lips on which the tide  
Of courtly speech abruptly died,  
And a glance which over the crowded floor,  
The dancers, and the festive host,  
Flew ever to the door.  
That the knights eyed her in surprise,  
And the dames whispered scoffingly :  
“ Her moods, good lack, they pass like showers !  
But yesternight and she would be  
As pale and still as wither'd flowers,  
And now to-night she laughs and speaks  
And has a colour in her cheeks ;  
Christ keep us from such fantasy ! ”—

Yes, now the longing is o'erpast,  
Which, dogg'd by fear and fought by shame,

Shook her weak bosom day and night,  
 Consumed her beauty like a flame,  
 And dimm'd it like the desert-blast.  
 And though the bed-clothes hide her face,  
 Yet were it lifted to the light,  
 The sweet expression of her brow  
 Would charm the gazer, till his thought  
 Erased the ravages of time,  
 Fill'd up the hollow cheek, and brought  
 A freshness back as of her prime—  
 So healing is her quiet now.  
 So perfectly the lines express  
 A tranquil, settled loveliness,  
 Her younger rival's purest grace.

The air of the December-night  
 Steals coldly around the chamber bright,  
 Where those lifeless lovers be ;  
 Swinging with it, in the light  
 Flaps the ghostlike tapestry.  
 And on the arras wrought you see  
 A stately Huntsman, clad in green,  
 And round him a fresh forest-scene.  
 On that clear forest-knoll he stays,  
 With his pack round him, and delays.  
 He stares and stares, with troubled face,  
 At this huge, gleam-lit fireplace,  
 At that bright, iron-figured door,  
 And those blown rushes on the floor.  
 He gazes down into the room  
 With heated cheeks and flurried air,  
 And to himself he seems to say :  
 " *What place is this, and who are they ?*

*Who is that kneeling Lady fair ?  
 And on his pillows that pale Knight  
 Who seems of marble on a tomb ?  
 How comes it here, this chamber bright,  
 Through whose mullion'd windows clear  
 The castle-court all wet with rain,  
 The drawbridge and the moat appear,  
 And then the beach, and, mark'd with spray,  
 The sunken reefs, and far away  
 The unquiet bright Atlantic plain ?  
 —What, has some glamour made me sleep,  
 And sent me with my dogs to sweep,  
 By night, with boisterous bugle-peal,  
 Through some old, sea-side, knightly hall,  
 Not in the free green wood at all ?  
 That Knight's asleep, and at her prayer  
 That Lady by the bed doth kneel—  
 Then hush, thou boisterous bugle-peal !”  
 —The wild boar rustles in his lair ;  
 The fierce hounds snuff the tainted air ;  
 But lord and hounds keep rooted there.*

Cheer, cheer thy dogs into the brake,  
 O Hunter ! and without a fear  
 Thy golden-tassell'd bugle blow,  
 And through the glades thy pastime take—  
 For thou wilt rouse no sleepers here !  
 For these thou seest are unmoved ;  
 Cold, cold as those who lived and loved  
 A thousand years ago.

## III

## Iseult of Brittany

A YEAR had flown, and o'er the sea away,  
In Cornwall, Tristram and Queen Iseult lay ;  
In King Marc's chapel, in Tyntagel old—  
There in a ship they bore those lovers cold.

The young surviving Iseult, one bright day,  
Had wander'd forth. Her children were at play  
In a green circular hollow in the heath  
Which borders the sea-shore—a country path  
Creeps over it from the till'd fields behind.  
The hollow's grassy banks are soft-inclined,  
And to one standing on them, far and near  
The lone unbroken view spreads bright and clear  
Over the waste. This cirque of open ground  
Is light and green ; the heather, which all round  
Creeps thickly, grows not here ; but the pale grass  
Is strewn with rocks, and many a shiver'd mass  
Of vein'd white-gleaming quartz, and here and there  
Dotted with holly-trees and juniper.

In the smooth centre of the opening stood  
Three hollies side by side, and made a screen,  
Warm with the winter-sun, of burnish'd green  
With scarlet berries gemm'd, the fell-fare's food.  
Under the glittering hollies Iseult stands,  
Watching her children play ; their little hands  
Are busy gathering spars of quartz, and streams  
Of stagshorn for their hats ; anon, with screams  
Of mad delight they drop their spoils, and bound  
Among the holly-clumps and broken ground,  
Racing full speed, and startling in their rush

The fell-fares and the speckled missel-thrush  
Out of their glossy coverts ;—but when now  
Their cheeks were flush'd, and over each hot brow,  
Under the feather'd hats of the sweet pair,  
In blinding masses shower'd the golden hair—  
Then Iseult call'd them to her, and the three  
Cluster'd under the holly-screen, and she  
Told them an old-world Breton history.

Warm in their mantles wrapt the three stood there,  
Under the hollies, in the clear still air—  
Mantles with those rich furs deep glistening  
Which Venice ships do from swart Egypt bring.  
Long they stay'd still—then, pacing at their ease,  
Moved up and down under the glossy trees.  
But still, as they pursued their warm dry road,  
From Iseult's lips the unbroken story flow'd,  
And still the children listen'd, their blue eyes  
Fix'd on their mother's face in wide surprise ;  
Nor did their looks stray once to the sea-side,  
Nor to the brown heaths round them, bright and wide,  
Nor to the snow, which, though 't was all away  
From the open heath, still by the hedgerows lay,  
Nor to the shining sea-fowl, that with screams  
Bore up from where the bright Atlantic gleams,  
Swooping to landward ; nor to where, quite clear,  
The fell-fares settled on the thickets near.  
And they would still have listen'd, till dark night  
Came keen and chill down on the heather bright ;  
But, when the red glow on the sea grew cold,  
And the grey turrets of the castle old  
Look'd sternly through the frosty evening-air,  
Then Iseult took by the hand those children fair,

And brought her tale to an end, and found the path,  
And led them home over the darkening heath.

And is she happy? Does she see unmoved  
The days in which she might have lived and loved  
Slip without bringing bliss slowly away,  
One after one, to-morrow like to-day?  
Joy has not found her yet, nor ever will—  
Is it this thought which makes her mien so still,  
Her features so fatigued, her eyes, though sweet,  
So sunk, so rarely lifted save to meet  
Her children's? She moves slow; her voice alone  
Hath yet an infantine and silver tone,  
But even that comes languidly; in truth,  
She seems one dying in a mask of youth.  
And now she will go home, and softly lay  
Her laughing children in their beds, and play  
Awhile with them before they sleep; and then  
She'll light her silver lamp, which fishermen  
Dragging their nets through the rough waves, afar,  
Along this iron coast, know like a star,  
And take her broidery-frame, and there she'll sit  
Hour after hour, her gold curls sweeping it;  
Lifting her soft-bent head only to mind  
Her children, or to listen to the wind.  
And when the clock peals midnight, she will move  
Her work away, and let her fingers rove  
Across the shaggy brows of Tristram's hound  
Who lies, guarding her feet, along the ground;  
Or else she will fall musing, her blue eyes  
Fixt, her slight hands clasp'd on her lap; then rise,  
And at her prie-dieu kneel, until she have told  
Her rosary-beads of ebony tipp'd with gold,



Then to her soft sleep—and to-morrow 'll be  
To-day's exact repeated effigy.

Yes, it is lonely for her in her hall.  
The children, and the grey-hair'd seneschal,  
Her women, and Sir Tristram's aged hound,  
Are there the sole companions to be found.  
But these she loves ; and noisier life than this  
She would find ill to bear, weak as she is.  
She has her children, too, and night and day  
Is with them ; and the wide heaths where they play,  
The hollies, and the cliff, and the sea-shore,  
The sand, the sea-birds, and the distant sails,  
These are to her dear as to them ; the tales  
With which this day the children she beguiled  
She gleaned from Breton grandames, when a child,  
In every hut along this sea-coast wild.  
She herself loves them still, and, when they are told,  
Can forget all to hear them, as of old.

Dear saints, it is not sorrow, as I hear,  
Not suffering, which shuts up eye and ear  
To all that has delighted them before,  
And lets us be what we were once no more.  
No, we may suffer deeply, yet retain  
Power to be moved and soothed, for all our pain,  
By what of old pleased us, and will again.  
No, 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,  
In whose hot air our spirits are upcurl'd  
Until they crumble, or else grow like steel—  
Which kills in us the bloom, the youth, the spring—  
Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,  
But takes away the power—this can avail,  
By drying up our joy in everything,

To make our former pleasures all seem stale.  
 This, or some tyrannous single thought, some fit  
 Of passion, which subdues our souls to it,  
 Till for its sake alone we live and move—  
 Call it ambition, or remorse, or love—  
 This too can change us wholly, and make seem  
 All which we did before, shadow and dream.

And yet, I swear, it angers me to see  
 How this fool passion gulls men potently ;  
 Being, in truth, but a diseased unrest,  
 And an unnatural overheat at best.  
 How they are full of languor and distress  
 Not having it ; which when they do possess,  
 They straightway are burnt up with fume and care,  
 And spend their lives in posting here and there  
 Where this plague drives them ; and have little ease,  
 Are furious with themselves, and hard to please.  
 Like that bold Cæsar, the famed Roman wight,  
 Who wept at reading of a Grecian knight  
 Who made a name at younger years than he ;  
 Or that renown'd mirror of chivalry,  
 Prince Alexander, Philip's peerless son,  
 Who carried the great war from Macedon  
 Into the Soudan's realm, and thundered on  
 To die at thirty-five in Babylon.

What tale did Iseult to the children say,  
 Under the hollies, that bright winter's day ?

She told them of the fairy-haunted land  
 Away the other side of Brittany,  
 Beyond the heaths, edged by the lonely sea ;  
 Of the deep forest-glades of Broce-liande,

Through whose green boughs the golden sunshine creeps,  
Where Merlin by the enchanted thorn-tree sleeps.  
For here he came with the fay Vivian,  
One April, when the warm days first began.  
He was on foot, and that false fay, his friend,  
On her white palfrey ; here he met his end,  
In these lone sylvan glades, that April-day.  
This tale of Merlin and the lovely fay  
Was the one Iseult chose, and she brought clear  
Before the children's fancy him and her.

Blowing between the stems, the forest-air  
Had loosen'd the brown locks of Vivian's hair,  
Which play'd on her flush'd cheek, and her blue eyes  
Sparkled with mocking glee and exercise.  
Her palfrey's flanks were mired and bathed in sweat,  
For they had travell'd far and not stopp'd yet.  
A brier in that tangled wilderness  
Had scored her white right hand, which she allows  
To rest ungloved on her green riding-dress ;  
The other warded off the drooping boughs.  
But still she chatted on, with her blue eyes  
Fix'd full on Merlin's face, her stately prize.  
Her 'haviour had the morning's fresh clear grace,  
The spirit of the woods was in her face.  
She look'd so witching fair, that learned wight  
Forgot his craft, and his best wits took flight ;  
And he grew fond, and eager to obey  
His mistress, use her empire as she may.

They came to where the brushwood ceased, and day  
Peer'd 'twixt the stems ; and the ground broke away,  
In a sloped sward down to a brawling brook ;  
And up as high as where they stood to look

On the brook's farther side was clear, but then  
The underwood and trees began again.  
This open glen was studded thick with thorns  
Then white with blossom ; and you saw the horns,  
Through last year's fern, of the shy fallow-deer  
Who come at noon down to the water here.  
You saw the bright-eyed squirrels dart along  
Under the thorns on the green sward ; and strong  
The blackbird whistled from the dingles near,  
And the weird chipping of the woodpecker  
Rang lonelily and sharp ; the sky was fair,  
And a fresh breath of spring stirr'd everywhere.  
Merlin and Vivian stopp'd on the slope's brow,  
To gaze on the light sea of leaf and bough  
Which glistering plays all round them, lone and mild,  
As if to itself the quiet forest smiled.  
Upon the brow-top grew a thorn, and here  
The grass was dry and moss'd, and you saw clear  
Across the hollow ; white anemonies  
Starr'd the cool turf, and clumps of primroses  
Ran out from the dark underwood behind.  
No fairer resting-place a man could find.  
"Here let us halt," said Merlin then ; and she  
Nodded, and tied her palfrey to a tree.

They sate them down together, and a sleep  
Fell upon Merlin, more like death, so deep.  
Her finger on her lips, then Vivian rose,  
And from her brown-lock'd head the wimple throws,  
And takes it in her hand, and waves it over  
The blossom'd thorn-tree and her sleeping lover.  
Nine times she waved the fluttering wimple round,  
And made a little plot of magic ground.

And in that daisied circle, as men say,  
 Is Merlin prisoner till the judgment-day ;  
 But she herself whither she will can rove—  
 For she was passing weary of his love.

## SAINT BRANDAN

SAINT BRANDAN sails the northern main ;  
 The brotherhoods of saints are glad.  
 He greets them once, he sails again ;  
 So late !—such storms !—The Saint is mad !

He heard, across the howling seas,  
 Chime convent-bells on wintry nights ;  
 He saw, on spray-swept Hebrides,  
 Twinkle the monastery-lights.

But north, still north, Saint Brandan steer'd—  
 And now no bells, no convents more !  
 The hurtling Polar lights are near'd,  
 The sea without a human shore.

At last—(it was the Christmas night ;  
 Stars shone after a day of storm)—  
 He sees float past an iceberg white,  
 And on it—Christ !—a living form.

That furtive mien, that scowling eye,  
 Of hair that red and tufted fell—  
 It is—Oh, where shall Brandan fly ?—  
 The traitor Judas, out of hell !

Palsied with terror, Brandan sate ;  
 The moon was bright, the iceberg near.  
 He hears a voice sigh humbly : “ Wait !  
 By high permission I am here.

“One moment wait, thou holy man !  
 On earth my crime, my death, they knew ;  
 My name is under all men’s ban—  
 Ah, tell them of my respite too !

“Tell them, one blessed Christmas-night—  
 (It was the first after I came,  
 Breathing self-murder, frenzy, spite,  
 To rue my guilt in endless flame)—

“I felt, as I in torment lay  
 ’Mid the souls plagued by heavenly power.  
 An angel touch mine arm, and say :  
*Go hence and cool thyself an hour !*

“‘Ah, whence this mercy, Lord?’ I said.  
*The Leper recollect, said he,  
 Who ask’d the passers-by for aid,  
 In Joppa, and thy charity.*

“Then I remember’d how I went,  
 In Joppa, through the public street,  
 One morn when the sirocco spent  
 Its storms of dust with burning heat ;

“And in the street a leper sate,  
 Shivering with fever, naked, old ;  
 Sand raked his sores from heel to pate,  
 The hot wind fever’d him five-fold.

“He gazed upon me as I pass’d,  
 And murmur’d : *Help me, or I die !—*  
 To the poor wretch my cloak I cast,  
 Saw him look eased, and hurried by.

“Oh, Brandan, think what grace divine,  
 What blessing must full goodness shower,

When fragment of it small, like mine,  
Hath such inestimable power !

“ Well-fed, well-clothed, well-friended, I  
Did that chance act of good, that one !  
Then went my way to kill and lie—  
Forgot my good as soon as done.

“ That germ of kindness, in the womb  
Of mercy caught, did not expire ;  
Outlives my guilt, outlives my doom,  
And friends me in the pit of fire.

“ Once every year, when carols wake,  
On earth, the Christmas-night’s repose,  
Arising from the sinners’ lake,  
I journey to these healing snows.

“ I stanch with ice my burning breast,  
With silence balm my whirling brain.  
O Brandan ! to this hour of rest  
That Joppan leper’s ease was pain.”——

Tears started to Saint Brandan’s eyes ;  
He bow’d his head, he breathed a prayer—  
Then look’d, and lo, the frosty skies !  
The iceberg, and no Judas there !

## THE NECKAN

IN summer, on the headlands,  
The Baltic Sea along,  
Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,  
And sings his plaintive song.

Green rolls beneath the headlands,  
Green rolls the Baltic Sea ;  
And there, below the Neckan's feet,  
His wife and children be.

He sings not of the ocean,  
Its shells and roses pale ;  
Of earth, of earth the Neckan sings,  
He hath no other tale.

He sits upon the headlands,  
And sings a mournful stave  
Of all he saw and felt on earth  
Far from the kind sea-wave.

Sings how, a knight, he wander'd  
By castle, field, and town—  
But earthly knights have harder hearts  
Than the sea-children own.

Sings of his earthly bridal—  
Priest, knights, and ladies gay.  
“—And who art thou,” the priest began,  
“ Sir Knight, who wedd'st to-day ? ”—

“—I am no knight,” he answered ;  
“ From the sea-waves I come.”—  
The knights drew sword, the ladies scream'd,  
The surpliced priest stood dumb.

He sings how from the chapel  
He vanish'd with his bride,  
And bore her down to the sea-halls,  
Beneath the salt sea-tide.

He sings how she sits weeping  
'Mid shells that round her lie.



“—False Neckan shares my bed,” she weeps ;  
“ No Christian mate have I.”—

He sings how through the billows  
He rose to earth again,  
And sought a priest to sign the cross,  
That Neckan Heaven might gain.

He sings how, on an evening,  
Beneath the birch-trees cool,  
He sate and play'd his harp of gold,  
Beside the river-pool.

Beside the pool sate Neckan—  
Tears fill'd his mild blue eye.  
On his white mule, across the bridge,  
A cassock'd priest rode by.

“—Why sitt'st thou there, O Neckan,  
And play'st thy harp of gold ?  
Sooner shall this my staff bear leaves,  
Than thou shalt Heaven behold.”—

But, lo, the staff, it budded !  
It green'd, it branch'd, it waved.  
“—O ruth of God,” the priest cried out,  
“ This lost sea-creature saved !”

The cassock'd priest rode onwards,  
And vanished with his mule ;  
But Neckan in the twilight grey  
Wept by the river-pool.

He wept : “ The earth hath kindness,  
The sea, the starry poles ;  
Earth, sea, and sky, and God above—  
But, ah, not human souls !”

In summer, on the headlands,  
 The Baltic Sea along,  
 Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,  
 And sings this plaintive song.

### THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

COME, dear children, let us away ;  
 Down and away below !  
 Now my brothers call from the bay,  
 Now the great winds shoreward blow,  
 Now the salt tides seaward flow ;  
 Now the wild white horses play,  
 Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.  
 Children dear, let us away !  
 This way, this way !

Call her once before you go—  
 Call once yet !  
 In a voice that she will know :  
 “Margaret ! Margaret !”  
 Children’s voices should be dear  
 (Call once more) to a mother’s ear ;  
 Children’s voices, wild with pain—  
 Surely she will come again !  
 Call her once and come away ;  
 This way, this way !  
 “Mother dear, we cannot stay !  
 The wild white horses foam and fret.”  
 Margaret ! Margaret !

Come, dear children, come away down ;  
 Call no more !

One last look at the white-wall'd town,  
And the little grey church on the windy shore;  
Then come down!  
She will not come though you call all day;  
Come away, come away!

Children dear, was it yesterday  
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?  
In the caverns where we lay,  
Through the surf and through the swell,  
The far-off sound of a silver bell?  
Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,  
Where the winds are all asleep;  
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,  
Where the salt weed sways in the stream,  
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,  
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;  
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,  
Dry their mail and bask in the brine;  
Where great whales come sailing by,  
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,  
Round the world for ever and aye?  
When did music come this way?  
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday  
(Call yet once) that she went away?  
Once she sate with you and me,  
On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,  
And the youngest sate on her knee.  
She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended it well,  
When down swung the sound of a far-off bell.  
She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear green sea;  
She said: "I must go, for my kinsfolk pray

In the little grey church on the shore to-day.  
 'Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah me !  
 And I lose my poor soul, Merman ! here with thee.”  
 I said : “ Go up, dear heart, through the waves ;  
 Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves !”  
 She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.  
 Children dear, was it yesterday ?

Children dear, were we long alone ?  
 “ The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan ;  
 Long prayers,” I said, “ in the world they say ;  
 Come !” I said ; and we rose through the surf in the bay.  
 We went up the beach, by the sandy down  
 Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-wall'd town ;  
 Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still,  
 To the little grey church on the windy hill.  
 From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,  
 But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.  
 We climb'd on the graves, on the stones worn with rains,  
 And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded panes.  
 She sate by the pillar ; we saw her clear :  
 “ Margaret, hist ! come quick, we are here !  
 Dear heart,” I said, “ we are long alone ;  
 The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.”  
 But, ah, she gave me never a look, <sup>inveſt</sup>  
 For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book ! }  
 Loud prays the priest ; shut stands the door.  
 Come away, children, call no more !  
 Come away, come down, call no more !

Down, down, down !  
 Down to the depths of the sea !  
 She sits at her wheel in the humming town,

Singing most joyfully.  
 Hark what she sings : " O joy, O joy,  
 For the humming street, and the child with its toy !  
 For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well ;  
 For the wheel where I spun,  
 And the blessed light of the sun !"  
 And so she sings her fill,  
 Singing most joyfully,  
 Till the spindle drops from her hand,  
 And the whizzing wheel stands still.  
 She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,  
 And over the sand at the sea ;  
 And her eyes are set in a stare ;  
 And anon there breaks a sigh,  
 And anon there drops a tear, *- + u w = c m*  
 From a sorrow-clouded eye,  
 And a heart sorrow-laden,  
 A long, long sigh ;  
 For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaiden  
 And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away children :  
 Come children, come down !  
 The hoarse wind blows coldly ;  
 Lights shine in the town.  
 She will start from her slumber  
 When gusts shake the door ;  
 She will hear the winds howling,  
 Will hear the waves roar.  
 We shall see, while above us  
 The waves roar and whirl,  
 A ceiling of amber,  
 A pavement of pearl.

Singing : “ Here came a mortal,  
But faithless was she !  
And alone dwell for ever  
The kings of the sea.”

But, children, at midnight,  
When soft the winds blow,  
When clear falls the moonlight,  
When spring-tides are low ;  
When sweet airs come seaward  
From heaths starr'd with broom,  
And high rocks throw mildly  
On the blanch'd sands a gloom ;  
Up the still, glistening beaches,  
Up the creeks we will hie,  
Over banks of bright seaweed  
The ebb-tide leaves dry.  
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,  
At the white, sleeping town ;  
At the church on the hill-side—  
And then come back down.  
Singing : “ There dwells a loved one,  
But cruel is she !  
She left lonely for ever  
The kings of the sea.”

SONNETS





## AUSTERITY OF POETRY

THAT son of Italy who tried to blow,<sup>9</sup>  
Ere Dante came, the trump of sacred song,  
In his light youth amid a festal throng  
Sate with his bride to see a public show.

Fair was the bride, and on her front did glow  
Youth like a star ; and what to youth belong—  
Gay raiment, sparkling gauds, elation strong.  
A prop gave way ! crash fell a platform ! lo,  
'Mid struggling sufferers, hurt to death, she lay !  
Shuddering, they drew her garments off—and found  
A robe of sackcloth next the smooth, white skin.

Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse ! young, gay,  
Radiant, adorn'd outside ; a hidden ground  
Of thought and of austerity within.

## A PICTURE AT NEWSTEAD

WHAT made my heart, at Newstead, fullest swell?—  
'Twas not the thought of Byron, of his cry  
Stormily sweet, his Titan-agony ;  
It was the sight of that Lord Arundel

Who struck, in heat, his child he loved so well,  
 And his child's reason flicker'd, and did die.  
 Painted (he will'd it) in the gallery  
 They hang ; the picture doth the story tell.

Behold the stern, mail'd father, staff in hand !  
 The little fair-hair'd son, with vacant gaze,  
 Where no more lights of sense or knowledge are !

Methinks the woe, which made that father stand  
 Baring his dumb remorse to future days,  
 Was woe than Byron's woe more tragic far.

## RACHEL

### I

IN Paris all look'd hot and like to fade.  
 Sere, in the garden of the Tuileries,  
 Sere with September, droop'd the chestnut-trees.  
 'Twas dawn ; a brougham roll'd through the streets  
 and made

Halt at the white and silent colonnade  
 Of the French Theatre. Worn with disease,  
 Rachel, with eyes no gazing can appease,  
 Sate in the brougham and those blank walls survey'd.

She follows the gay world, whose swarms have fled  
 To Switzerland, to Baden, to the Rhine ;  
 Why stops she by this empty play-house drear ?

Ah, where the spirit its highest life hath led,  
 All spots, match'd with that spot, are less divine ;  
 And Rachel's Switzerland, her Rhine, is here !

## II

UNTO a lonely villa, in a dell  
 Above the fragrant warm Provençal shore,  
 The dying Rachel in a chair they bore  
 Up the steep pine-plumed paths of the Estrelle,

And laid her in a stately room, where fell  
 The shadow of a marble Muse of yore,  
 The rose-crown'd queen of legendary lore,  
 Polymnia, full on her death-bed.—'Twas well !

The fret and misery of our northern towns,  
 In this her life's last day, our poor, our pain,  
 Our jangle of false wits, our climate's frowns,

Do for this radiant Greek-soul'd artist cease ;  
 Sole object of her dying eyes remain  
 The beauty and the glorious art of Greece.

## III

SPRUNG from the blood of Israel's scatter'd race,  
 At a mean inn in German Aarau born,  
 To forms from antique Greece and Rome uptorn,  
 Trick'd out with a Parisian speech and face,

Imparting life renew'd, old classic grace ;  
 Then, soothing with thy Christian strain forlorn,  
 A-Kempis ! her departing soul outworn,  
 While by her bedside Hebrew rites have place—

Ah, not the radiant spirit of Greece alone  
 She had—one power, which made her breast its home !  
 In her, like us, there clash'd, contending powers,

Germany, France, Christ, Moses, Athens, Rome.  
 The strife, the mixture in her soul, are ours ;  
 Her genius and her glory are her own.

### WORLDLY PLACE

*EVEN in a palace, life may be led well!*

So spake the imperial sage, purest of men,  
 Marcus Aurelius. But the stifling den  
 Of common life, where, crowded up pell-mell,

Our freedom for a little bread we sell,  
 And drudge under some foolish master's ken  
 Who rates us if we peer outside our pen—  
 Match'd with a palace, is not this a hell?

*Even in a palace!* On his truth sincere,  
 Who spoke these words, no shadow ever came ;  
 And when my ill-school'd spirit is aflame

Some nobler, ampler stage of life to win,  
 I'll stop, and say : "There were no succour here!  
 The aids to noble life are all within."

### EAST LONDON

"TWAS August, and the fierce sun overhead  
 Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,  
 And the pale weaver, through his windows seen  
 In Spitalfields, look'd thrice dispirited.

I met a preacher there I knew, and said :  
 "Ill and o'erwork'd, how fare you in this scene?"—

“Bravely!’ said he ; “for I of late have been  
Much cheer’d with thoughts of Christ, *the living bread.*”

O human soul ! as long as thou canst so  
Set up a mark of everlasting light,  
Above the howling senses’ ebb and flow,  
To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam—  
Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night !  
Thou mak’st the heaven thou hop’st indeed thy home.

### WEST LONDON

CROUCH’D on the pavement, close by Belgrave Square,  
A tramp I saw, ill, moody, and tongue-tied.  
A babe was in her arms, and at her side  
A girl ; their clothes were rags, their feet were bare.  
Some labouring men, whose work lay somewhere there,  
Pass’d opposite ; she touch’d her girl, who hied  
Across, and begg’d, and came back satisfied.  
The rich she had let pass with frozen stare.  
Thought I : “Above her state this spirit towers ;  
She will not ask of aliens, but of friends,  
Of sharers in a common human fate.  
“She turns from that cold succour, which attends  
The unknown little from the unknowing great,  
And points us to a better time than ours.”

### EAST AND WEST

IN the bare midst of Anglesey they show  
Two springs which close by one another play ;

And, "Thirteen hundred years ago," they say,  
 "Two saints met often where those waters flow.

"One came from Penmon westward, and a glow  
 Whiten'd his face from the sun's fronting ray ;  
 Eastward the other, from the dying day,  
 And he with unsunn'd face did always go."

*Seiriol the Bright, Kybi the Dark!* men said.  
 The seër from the East was then in light,  
 The seër from the West was then in shade.

Ah! now 'tis changed. In conquering sunshine bright  
 The man of the bold West now comes array'd ;  
 He of the mystic East is touch'd with night.

### THE BETTER PART

LONG fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,  
 How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare !  
 "Christ," some one says, "was human as we are ;  
 No judge eyes us from Heaven, our sin to scan ;

"We live no more, when we have done our span."—  
 "Well, then, for Christ," thou answerest, "who can care ?  
 From sin, which Heaven records not, why forbear ?  
 Live we like brutes our life without a plan !"

So answerest thou ; but why not rather say :  
 "Hath man no second life?—*Pitch this one high !*  
 Sits there no judge in Heaven, our sin to see?—

*"More strictly, then, the inward judge obey !*  
 Was Christ a man like us? *Ah ! let us try*  
*If we then, too, can be such men as he !"*

## THE DIVINITY

“YES, write it in the rock,” Saint Bernard said,  
 “Grave it on brass with adamantine pen !  
 ’Tis God himself becomes apparent, when  
 God’s wisdom and God’s goodness are display’d,  
 “For God of these his attributes is made.”—  
 Well spake the impetuous Saint, and bore of men  
 The suffrage captive ; now, not one in ten  
 Recalls the obscure opposer he outweigh’d.<sup>10</sup>

*God’s wisdom and God’s goodness !—*Ay, but fools  
 Mis-define these till God knows them no more.  
*Wisdom and goodness, they are God !—*what schools  
 Have yet so much as heard this simpler lore ?  
 This no Saint preaches, and this no Church rules ;  
 ’Tis in the desert, now and heretofore.

## IMMORTALITY

FOIL’D by our fellow-men, depress’d, outworn,  
 We leave the brutal world to take its way,  
 And, *Patience ! in another life*, we say,  
*The world shall be thrust down, and we up-borne.*

And will not, then, the immortal armies scorn  
 The world’s poor, routed leavings ? or will they,  
 Who fail’d under the heat of this life’s day,  
 Support the fervours of the heavenly morn ?

No, no ! the energy of life may be  
 Kept on after the grave, but not begun ;  
 And he who flagg’d not in the earthly strife,

From strength to strength advancing—only he,  
 His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,  
 Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.

### THE GOOD SHEPHERD WITH THE KID

*HE saves the sheep, the goats he doth not save.*  
 So rang Tertullian's sentence, on the side  
 Of that un pitying Phrygian sect which cried :<sup>11</sup>  
 " Him can no fount of fresh forgiveness lave,  
 " Who sins, once wash'd by the baptismal wave."—  
 So spake the fierce Tertullian. But she sigh'd,  
 The infant Church ! of love she felt the tide  
 Stream on her from her Lord's yet recent grave.  
 And then she smiled ; and in the Catacombs,  
 With eye suffused but heart inspired true,  
 On those walls subterranean, where she hid  
 Her head 'mid ignominy, death, and tombs,  
 She her Good Shepherd's hasty image drew—  
 And on his shoulders, not a lamb, a kid.

### MONICA'S LAST PRAYER<sup>12</sup>

" AH, could thy grave at home, at Carthage, be !"  
*Care not for that, and lay me where I fall !*  
*Everywhere heard will be the judgment-call ;*  
*But at God's altar, oh ! remember me.*

Thus Monica, and died in Italy.  
 Yet fervent had her longing been, through all



Her course, for home at last, and burial  
With her own husband, by the Libyan sea.

Had been ! but at the end, to her pure soul  
All tie with all beside seem'd vain and cheap,  
And union before God the only care.

Creeds pass, rites change, no altar standeth whole.  
Yet we her memory, as she pray'd, will keep,  
Keep by this : *Life in God, and union there !*



LYRIC POEMS



## SWITZERLAND

### I. MEETING

AGAIN I see my bliss at hand,  
The town, the lake are here ;  
My Marguerite smiles upon the strand,<sup>13</sup>  
Unalter'd with the year.

I know that graceful figure fair,  
That cheek of languid hue ;  
I know that soft, enkerchief'd hair,  
And those sweet eyes of blue.

Again I spring to make my choice ;  
Again in tones of ire  
I hear a God's tremendous voice :  
" Be counsell'd, and retire."

Ye guiding Powers who join and part,  
What would ye have with me ?  
Ah, warn some more ambitious heart,  
And let the peaceful be !

### 2. PARTING

YE storm-winds of Autumn !  
Who rush by, who shake

The window, and ruffle  
 The gleam-lighted lake ;  
 Who cross to the hill-side  
 Thin-sprinkled with farms,  
 Where the high woods strip sadly  
 Their yellowing arms—  
 Ye are bound for the mountains !  
 Ah ! with you let me go  
 Where your cold, distant barrier,  
 The vast range of snow,  
 Through the loose clouds lifts dimly  
 Its white peaks in air—  
 How deep is their stillness !  
 Ah, would I were there !

But on the stairs what voice is this I hear,  
 Buoyant as morning, and as morning clear ?  
 Say, has some wet bird-haunted English lawn  
 Lent it the music of its trees at dawn ?  
 Or was it from some sun-fleck'd mountain-brook  
 That the sweet voice its upland clearness took ?

Ah ! it comes nearer—

Sweet notes, this way !

Hark ! fast by the window  
 The rushing winds go,  
 To the ice-cumber'd gorges,  
 The vast seas of snow !  
 There the torrents drive upward  
 Their rock-strangled hum ;  
 There the avalanche thunders  
 The hoarse torrent dumb.  
 —I come, O ye mountains !  
 Ye torrents, I come !

But who is this, by the half-open'd door,  
 Whose figure casts a shadow on the floor?  
 The sweet blue eyes—the soft, ash-colour'd hair—  
 The cheeks that still their gentle paleness wear—  
 The lovely lips, with their arch smile that tells  
 The unconquer'd joy in which her spirit dwells—

Ah! they bend nearer—

Sweet lips, this way!

Hark! the wind rushes past us!

Ah! with that let me go

To the clear, waning hill-side,

Unspotted by snow,

There to watch, o'er the sunk vale,

The frore mountain-wall,

Where the niched snow-bed sprays down

Its powdery fall.

There its dusky blue clusters

The aconite spreads;

There the pines slope, the cloud-strips

Hung soft in their heads.

No life but, at moments,

The mountain-bee's hum.

—I come, O ye mountains!

Ye pine-woods, I come!

Forgive me! forgive me!

Ah, Marguerite, fain

Would these arms reach to clasp thee!

But see! 'tis in vain.

In the void air, towards thee,

My stretch'd arms are cast;

But a sea rolls between us—

Our different past!

To the lips, ah ! of others  
     Those lips have been prest,  
 And others, ere I was,  
     Were strain'd to that breast ;  
 Far, far from each other  
     Our spirits have grown ;  
 And what heart knows another ?  
     Ah ! who knows his own ?  
 Blow, ye winds ! lift me with you !  
     I come to the wild.  
 Fold closely, O Nature !  
     Thine arms round thy child.  
 To thee only God granted  
     A heart ever new—  
 To all always open,  
     To all always true.  
 Ah ! calm me, restore me ;  
     And dry up my tears  
 On thy high mountain-platforms,  
     Where morn first appears ;  
 Where the white mists, for ever,  
     Are spread and upfurl'd—  
 In the stir of the forces  
     Whence issued the world.

### 3. A FAREWELL

My horse's feet beside the lake,  
 Where sweet the unbroken moonbeams lay,  
 Sent echoes through the night to wake  
 Each glistening strand, each heath-fringed bay.



The poplar avenue was pass'd,  
And the roof'd bridge that spans the stream ;  
Up the steep street I hurried fast,  
Led by thy taper's starlike beam.

I came !, I saw thee rise !—the blood  
Pour'd flushing to thy languid cheek.  
Lock'd in each other's arms we stood,  
In tears, with hearts too full to speak.

Days flew ;—ah, soon I could discern  
A trouble in thine alter'd air !  
Thy hand lay languidly in mine,  
Thy cheek was grave, thy speech grew rare.

I blame thee not !—this heart, I know,  
To be long loved was never framed ;  
For something in its depths doth glow  
Too strange, too restless, too untamed.

And women—things that live and move  
Mined by the fever of the soul—  
They seek to find in those they love  
Stern strength, and promise of control.

They ask not kindness, gentle ways—  
These they themselves have tried and known ;  
They ask a soul which never sways  
With the blind gusts that shake their own.

I too have felt the load I bore  
In a too strong emotion's sway ;  
I too have wish'd, no woman more,  
This starting, feverish heart away.

I too have long'd for trenchant force,  
And will like a dividing spear ;

Have praised the keen, unscrupulous course,  
Which knows no doubt, which feels no fear.

But in the world I learnt, what there  
Thou too wilt surely one day prove,  
That will, that energy, though rare,  
Are yet far, far less rare than love.

Go, then!—till time and fate impress  
This truth on thee, be mine no more!  
They will!—for thou, I feel, not less  
Than I, wast destined to this lore.

We school our manners, act our parts—  
But He, who sees us through and through,  
Knows that the bent of both our hearts  
Was to be gentle, tranquil, true.

And though we wear out life, alas!  
Distracted as a homeless wind,  
In beating where we must not pass,  
In seeking what we shall not find;  
Yet we shall one day gain, life past,  
Clear prospect o'er our being's whole;  
Shall see ourselves, and learn at last  
Our true affinities of soul.

We shall not then deny a course  
To every thought the mass ignore;  
We shall not then call hardness force,  
Nor lightness wisdom any more.

Then, in the eternal Father's smile,  
Our soothed, encouraged souls will dare  
To seem as free from pride and guile,  
As good, as generous, as they are.

Then we shall know our friends!—though much  
 Will have been lost—the help in strife,  
 The thousand sweet, still joys of such  
 As hand in hand face earthly life—

Though these be lost, there will be yet  
 A sympathy august and pure ;  
 Ennobled by a vast regret,  
 And by contrition seal'd thrice sure.

And we, whose ways were unlike here,  
 May then more neighbouring courses ply ;  
 May to each other be brought near,  
 And greet across infinity.

How sweet, unreach'd by earthly jars,  
 ✓ My sister ! to maintain with thee  
 The hush among the shining stars,  
 The calm upon the moonlit sea !

How sweet to feel, on the boon air,  
 All our unquiet pulses cease !  
 To feel that nothing can impair  
 The gentleness, the thirst for peace—

The gentleness too rudely hurl'd  
 On this wild earth of hate and fear ;  
 The thirst for peace a raving world  
 Would never let us satiate here.

#### 4. ISOLATION. TO MARGUERITE

WE were apart ; yet, day by day,  
 I bade my heart more constant be.  
 I bade it keep the world away,  
 And grow a home for only thee ;

Nor fear'd but thy love likewise grew,  
Like mine, each day, more tried, more true.

The fault was grave! I might have known,  
What far too soon, alas! I learn'd—  
The heart can bind itself alone,  
And faith may oft be unreturn'd.  
Self-sway'd our feelings ebb and swell—  
Thou lov'st no more;—Farewell! Farewell!

Farewell!—and thou, thou lonely heart,  
Which never yet without remorse  
Even for a moment didst depart  
From thy remote and spheréd course  
To haunt the place where passions reign—  
Back to thy solitude again!

Back! with the conscious thrill of shame  
Which Luna felt, that summer-night,  
Flash through her pure immortal frame,  
When she forsook the starry height  
To hang over Endymion's sleep  
Upon the pine-grown Latmian steep.

Yet she, chaste queen, had never proved  
How vain a thing is mortal love,  
Wandering in Heaven, far removed.  
But thou hast long had place to prove  
This truth—to prove, and make thine own:  
“Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone.”

Or, if not quite alone, yet they  
Which touch thee are unmating things—  
Ocean and clouds and night and day;  
Lorn autumns and triumphant springs;

And life, and others' joy and pain,  
And love, if love, of happier men.

Of happier men—for they, at least,  
Have *dream'd* two human hearts might blend  
In one, and were through faith released  
From isolation without end  
Prolong'd ; nor knew, although not less  
Alone than thou, their loneliness.

5. TO MARGUERITE—CONTINUED

YES ! in the sea of life enisled,  
With echoing straits between us thrown,  
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,  
We mortal millions live *alone*.  
The islands feel the enclasping flow,  
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights,  
And they are swept by balms of spring,  
And in their glens, on starry nights,  
The nightingales divinely sing ;  
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,  
Across the sounds and channels pour—

Oh ! then a longing like despair  
Is to their farthest caverns sent ;  
For surely once, they feel, we were  
Parts of a single continent !  
Now round us spreads the watery plain—  
Oh might our marges meet again !

Who order'd, that their longing's fire  
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd ?

Who renders vain their deep desire?—  
 A God, a God their severance ruled!  
 And bade betwixt their shores to be  
 The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

## 6. ABSENCE

IN this fair stranger's eyes of grey  
 Thine eyes, my love! I see.  
 I shiver; for the passing day  
 Had borne me far from thee.

This is the curse of life! that not  
 A nobler, calmer train  
 Of wiser thoughts and feelings blot  
 Our passions from our brain;

But each day brings its petty dust  
 Our soon-choked souls to fill,  
 And we forget because we must  
 And not because we will.

I struggle towards the light; and ye,  
 Once-long'd-for storms of love!  
 If with the light ye cannot be,  
 I bear that ye remove.

I struggle towards the light—but oh,  
 While yet the night is chill,  
 Upon time's barren, stormy flow,  
 Stay with me, Marguerite, still!

## 7. THE TERRACE AT BERNE

(COMPOSED TEN YEARS AFTER THE PRECEDING)

TEN years !—and to my waking eye  
Once more the roofs of Berne appear ;  
The rocky banks, the terrace high,  
The stream !—and do I linger here ?

The clouds are on the Oberland,  
The Jungfrau snows look faint and far ;  
But bright are those green fields at hand,  
And through those fields comes down the Aar,

And from the blue twin-lakes it comes,  
Flows by the town, the churchyard fair ;  
And 'neath the garden-walk it hums,  
The house !—and is my Marguerite there ?

Ah, shall I see thee, while a flush  
Of startled pleasure floods thy brow,  
Quick through the oleanders brush,  
And clap thy hands, and cry : *'Tis thou !*

Or hast thou long since wander'd back,  
Daughter of France ! to France, thy home ;  
And flitted down the flowery track  
Where feet like thine too lightly come ?

Doth riotous laughter now replace  
Thy smile ; and rouge, with stony glare,  
Thy cheek's soft hue ; and fluttering lace  
The kerchief that enwound thy hair ?

Or is it over?—art thou dead?—  
Dead!—and no warning shiver ran  
Across my heart, to say thy thread  
Of life was cut, and closed thy span!

Could from earth's ways that figure slight  
Be lost, and I not feel 'twas so?  
Of that fresh voice the gay delight  
Fail from earth's air, and I not know?

Or shall I find thee still, but changed,  
But not the Marguerite of thy prime?  
With all thy being re-arranged,  
Pass'd through the crucible of time;

With spirit vanish'd, beauty waned,  
And hardly yet a glance, a tone,  
A gesture—anything—retain'd  
Of all that was my Marguerite's own?

I will not know!—For wherefore try,  
To things by mortal course that live,  
A shadowy durability,  
For which they were not meant, to give?

Like driftwood spars, which meet and pass  
Upon the boundless ocean-plain,  
So on the sea of life, alas!  
Man meets man—meets, and quits again.

I knew it when my life was young;  
I feel it still, now youth is o'er.  
—The mists are on the mountain hung,  
And Marguerite I shall see no more.



## THE STRAYED REVELLER

THE PORTICO OF CIRCE'S PALACE. EVENING

*A Youth. Circe**The Youth*

FASTER, faster,  
O Circe, Goddess,  
Let the wild, thronging train,  
The bright procession  
Of eddying forms,  
Sweep through my soul !

Thou standest, smiling  
Down on me ! thy right arm,  
Lean'd up against the column there,  
Props thy soft cheek ;  
Thy left holds, hanging loosely,  
The deep cup, ivy-cinctured,  
I held but now.

Is it, then, evening  
So soon ? I see, the night-dews,  
Cluster'd in thick beads, dim  
The agate brooch-stones  
On thy white shoulder ;  
The cool night-wind, too,  
Blows through the portico,  
Stirs thy hair, Goddess,  
Waves thy white robe !

*Circe*

Whence art thou, sleeper ?

*The Youth*

When the white dawn first  
Through the rough fir-planks  
Of my hut, by the chestnuts,  
Up at the valley-head,  
Came breaking, Goddess !  
I sprang up, I threw round me  
My dappled fawn-skin ;  
Passing out, from the wet turf,  
Where they lay, by the hut door,  
I snatch'd up my vine-crown, my fir-staff,  
All drench'd in dew—  
Came swift down to join  
The rout early gather'd  
In the town, round the temple,  
Iacchus' white fane  
On yonder hill.

Quick I pass'd, following  
The wood-cutters' cart-track  
Down the dark valley ;—I saw  
On my left, through the beeches,  
Thy palace, Goddess,  
Smokeless, empty !  
Trembling, I enter'd ; beheld  
The court all silent,  
The lions sleeping,  
On the altar this bowl.  
I drank, Goddess !  
And sank down here, sleeping,  
On the steps of thy portico.

*Circe*

Foolish boy! Why tremblest thou?  
 Thou lovest it, then, my wine?  
 Wouldst more of it? See, how glows,  
 Through the delicate, flush'd marble,  
 The red, creaming liquor,  
 Strown with dark seeds!  
 Drink, then! I chide thee not,  
 Deny thee not my bowl.  
 Come, stretch forth thy hand, then—so!  
 Drink—drink again!

*The Youth*

Thanks, gracious one!  
 Ah, the sweet fumes again!  
 More soft, ah me,  
 More subtle-winding  
 That Pan's flute-music!  
 Faint—faint! Ah me,  
 Again the sweet sleep!

*Circe*

Hist! Thou—within there!  
 Come forth, Ulysses!  
 Art tired with hunting?  
 While we range the woodland,  
 See what the day brings.

*Ulysses*

Ever new magic!  
 Hast thou then lured hither,  
 Wonderful Goddess, by thy art,  
 The young, languid-eyed Ampelus,

Iacchus' darling—  
 Or some youth beloved of Pan,  
 Of Pan and the Nymphs?  
 That he sits, bending downward  
 His white, delicate neck  
 To the ivy-wreathed marge  
 Of thy cup; the bright, glancing vine-leaves  
 That crown his hair,  
 Falling forward, mingling  
 With the dark ivy-plants—  
 His fawn-skin, half untied,  
 Smear'd with red wine-stains? Who is he,  
 That he sits, overweigh'd  
 By fumes of wine and sleep,  
 So late, in thy portico?  
 What youth, Goddess,—what guest  
 Of Gods or mortals?

*Circe*

Hist! he wakes!  
 I lured him not hither, Ulysses.  
 Nay, ask him!

*The Youth*

Who speaks? Ah, who comes forth  
 To thy side, Goddess, from within?  
 How shall I name him?  
 This spare, dark-featured,  
 Quick-eyed stranger?  
 Ah, and I see too  
 His sailor's bonnet,  
 His short coat, travel-tarnish'd,  
 With one arm bare!—

Art thou not he, whom fame  
This long time rumours  
The favour'd guest of Circe, brought by the waves?  
Art thou he, stranger?  
The wise Ulysses,  
Laertes' son?

*Ulysses*

I am Ulysses.  
And thou, too, sleeper?  
Thy voice is sweet.  
It may be thou hast follow'd  
Through the islands some divine bard,  
By age taught many things,  
Age and the Muses;  
And heard him delighting  
The chiefs and people  
In the banquet, and learn'd his songs,  
Of Gods and Heroes,  
Of war and arts,  
And peopled cities,  
Inland, or built  
By the grey sea.—If so, then hail!  
I honour and welcome thee.

*The Youth*

The Gods are happy.  
They turn on all sides  
Their shining eyes,  
And see below them  
The earth and men.  
  
They see Tiresias  
Sitting, staff in hand,

On the warm, grassy  
Asopus bank,  
His robe drawn over  
His old, sightless head,  
Revolving inly  
The doom of Thebes.

They see the Centaurs  
In the upper glens  
Of Pelion, in the streams,  
Where red-berried ashes fringe  
The clear-brown shallow pools,  
With streaming flanks, and heads  
Rear'd proudly, snuffing  
The mountain wind.

They see the Indian  
Drifting, knife in hand,  
His frail boat moor'd to  
A floating isle thick-matted  
With large-leaved, low-creeping melon-plants,  
And the dark cucumber.  
He reaps, and stows them,  
Drifting—drifting ;—round him,  
Round his green harvest-plot,  
Flow the cool lake-waves,  
The mountains ring them.

They see the Scythian  
On the wide stepp, unharnessing  
His wheel'd house at noon.  
He tethers his beast down, and makes his meal—  
Mares' milk, and bread  
Baked on the embers ;—all around  
The boundless, waving grass-plains stretch, thick-starr'd

With saffron and the yellow hollyhock  
And flag-leaved iris-flowers.  
Sitting in his cart  
He makes his meal ; before him, for long miles,  
Alive with bright green lizards,  
And the springing bustard-fowl,  
The track, a straight black line,  
Furrows the rich soil ; here and there  
Clusters of lonely mounds  
Topp'd with rough-hewn,  
Grey, rain-blear'd statues, overpeer  
The sunny waste.

They see the ferry  
On the broad, clay-laden  
Lone Chorasmian stream ;—thereon,  
With snort and strain,  
Two horses, strongly swimming, tow  
The ferry-boat, with woven ropes  
To either bow  
Firm harness'd by the mane ; a chief,  
With shout and shaken spear,  
Stands at the prow, and guides them ; but astern  
The cowering merchants, in long robes,  
Sit pale beside their wealth  
Of silk-bales and of balsam-drops,  
Of gold and ivory,  
Of turquoise-earth and amethyst,  
Jasper and chalcedony,  
And milk-barr'd onyx-stones.  
The loaded boat swings groaning  
In the yellow eddies ;  
The Gods behold them.

They see the Heroes  
 Sitting in the dark ship  
 On the foamless, long-heaving  
 Violet sea,  
 At sunset nearing  
 The Happy Islands.

These things, Ulysses,  
 The wise bards also  
 Behold and sing.  
 But oh, what labour !  
 O prince, what pain !

They too can see  
 Tiresias ;—but the Gods,  
 Who give them vision,  
 Added this law :  
 That they should bear too  
 His groping blindness,  
 His dark foreboding,  
 His scorn'd white hairs ;  
 Bear Hera's anger  
 Through a life lengthen'd  
 To seven ages.

They see the Centaurs  
 On Pelion ;—then they feel,  
 They too, the maddening wine  
 Swell their large veins to bursting ; in wild pain  
 They feel the biting spears  
 Of the grim Lapithæ, and Theseus, drive,  
 Drive crashing through their bones ; they feel  
 High on a jutting rock in the red stream  
 Alcmena's dreadful son  
 Ply his bow ;—such a price



The Gods exact for song :  
To become what we sing.

They see the Indian  
On his mountain lake ; but squalls  
Make their skiff reel, and worms  
In the unkind spring have gnawn  
Their melon-harvest to the heart.—They see  
The Scythian ; but long frosts  
Parch them in winter-time on the bare stepp,  
Till they too fade like grass ; they crawl  
Like shadows forth in spring.

They see the merchants  
On the Oxus stream ;—but care  
Must visit first them too, and make them pale.  
Whether, through whirling sand,  
A cloud of desert robber-horse have burst  
Upon their caravan ; or greedy kings,  
In the wall'd cities the way passes through,  
Crush'd them with tolls ; or fever-airs,  
On some great river's marge,  
Mown them down, far from home.

They see the Heroes  
Near harbour ;—but they share  
Their lives, and former violent toil in Thebes,  
Seven-gated Thebes, or Troy ;  
Or where the echoing oars  
Of Argo first  
Startled the unknown sea.

The old Silenus  
Came, lolling in the sunshine,  
From the dewy forest-coverts,

This way, at noon.  
Sitting by me, while his Fauns  
Down at the water-side  
Sprinkled and smoothed  
His drooping garland,  
He told me these things.

But I, Ulysses,  
Sitting on the warm steps,  
Looking over the valley,  
All day long, have seen,  
Without pain, without labour,  
Sometimes a wild-hair'd Mænad—  
Sometimes a Faun with torches—  
And sometimes, for a moment,  
Passing through the dark stems  
Flowing-robed, the beloved,  
The desired, the divine,  
Beloved Iacchus.

Ah, cool night-wind, tremulous stars !  
Ah, glimmering water,  
Fitful earth-murmur,  
Dreaming woods !  
Ah, golden-hair'd, strangely smiling Goddess,  
And thou, proved, much enduring,  
Wave-toss'd Wanderer !  
Who can stand still ?  
Ye fade, ye swim, ye waver before me—  
The cup again !

Faster, faster,  
O Circe, Goddess,  
Let the wild, thronging train,

The bright procession  
 Of eddying forms,  
 Sweep through my soul !

## FRAGMENT OF AN "ANTIGONE"

*The Chorus*

WELL hath he done who hath seized happiness !  
 For little do the all-containing hours,  
     Though opulent, freely give.  
     Who, weighing that life well  
     Fortune presents unpray'd,  
 Declines her ministry, and carves his own ;  
     And, justice not infringed,  
 Makes his own welfare his unswerved-from law.

He does well too, who keeps that clue the mild  
 Birth-Goddess and the austere Fates first gave.  
     For from the day when these  
     Bring him, a weeping child,  
     First to the light, and mark  
 A country for him, kinsfolk, and a home,  
     Unguided he remains,  
 Till the Fates come again, this time with death.

    In little companies,  
     And, our own place once left,  
 Ignorant where to stand, or whom to avoid,  
 By city and household group'd, we live ; and many shocks  
     Our order heaven-ordain'd  
     Must every day endure :  
 Voyages, exiles, hates, dissensions, wars.

Besides what waste *he* makes,  
 The all-hated, order-breaking,  
 Without friend, city, or home,  
 Death, who dissevers all.

Him then I praise, who dares  
 To self-selected good  
 Prefer obedience to the primal law,  
 Which consecrates the ties of blood ; for these, indeed,  
     Are to the Gods a care ;  
     That touches but himself.  
 For every day man may be link'd and loosed  
     With strangers ; but the bond  
     Original, deep-inwound,  
     Of blood, can he not bind,  
     Nor, if Fate binds, not bear.

But hush ! Hæmon, whom Antigone,  
 Robbing herself of life in burying,  
 Against Creon's law, Polynices,  
 Robs of a loved bride—pale, imploring,  
     Waiting her passage,  
 Forth from the palace hitherward comes.

*Hæmon*

No, no, old men, Creon, I curse not !  
     I weep, Thebans,  
     One than Creon crueller far !  
 For he, he, at least, by slaying her,  
 August laws doth mightily vindicate ;  
 But thou, too-bold, headstrong, pitiless !  
 Ah me !—honourest more than thy lover,  
     O Antigone !  
 A dead, ignorant, thankless corpse.

*The Chorus*

Nor was the love untrue  
 Which the Dawn-Goddess bore  
 To that fair youth she erst,  
 Leaving the salt sea-beds  
 And coming flush'd over the stormy frith  
 Of loud Euripus, saw—  
 Saw and snatch'd, wild with love,  
 From the pine-dotted spurs  
 Of Parnes, where thy waves,  
 Asopus! glean rock-hemm'd—  
 The Hunter of the Tanagræan Field.<sup>14</sup>

But him, in his sweet prime,  
 By severance immature,  
 By Artemis' soft shafts,  
 She, though a Goddess born,  
 Saw in the rocky isle of Delos die.  
 Such end o'ertook that love.  
 For she desired to make  
 Immortal mortal man,  
 And blend his happy life,  
 Far from the Gods, with hers ;  
 To him postponing an eternal law.

*Hæmon*

But like me, she, wroth, complaining,  
 Succumb'd to the envy of unkind Gods ;  
 And, her beautiful arms unclasping,  
 Her fair youth unwillingly gave.

*The Chorus*

Nor, though enthroned too high  
 To fear assault of envious Gods,

His beloved Argive seer would Zeus retain  
 From his appointed end  
 In this our Thebes ; but when  
 His flying steeds came near  
 To cross the steep Ismenian glen,  
 The broad earth open'd, and whelm'd them and him ;  
 And through the void air sang  
 At large his enemy's spear.

And fain would Zeus have saved his tired son  
 Beholding him where the Two Pillars stand  
 O'er the sun-redden'd western straits,<sup>15</sup>  
 Or at his work in that dim lower world.  
 Fain would he have recall'd  
 The fraudulent oath which bound  
 To a much feebler wight the heroic man.

But he preferr'd Fate to his strong desire.  
 Nor did there need less than the burning pile  
 Under the towering Trachis crags,  
 And the Spercheios vale, shaken with groans,  
 And the roused Maliac gulph,  
 And scared Cætean snows,  
 To achieve his son's deliverance, O my child !

#### FRAGMENT OF CHORUS OF A "DEJANEIRA"

O FRIVOLOUS mind of man,  
 Light ignorance, and hurrying, unsure thoughts !  
 Though man bewails you not,  
 How *I* bewail you !

Little in your prosperity  
 Do you seek counsel of the Gods.

Proud, ignorant, self-adored, you live alone.  
 In profound silence stern,  
 Among their savage gorges and cold springs,  
 Unvisited remain  
 The great oracular shrines.

Thither in your adversity  
 Do you betake yourselves for light,  
 But strangely misinterpret all you hear.  
 For you will not put on  
 New hearts with the enquirer's holy robe,  
 And purged, considerate minds.

And him on whom, at the end  
 Of toil and dolour untold,  
 The Gods have said that repose  
 At last shall descend undisturb'd—  
 Him you expect to behold  
 In an easy old age, in a happy home ;  
 No end but this you praise.

But him, on whom, in the prime  
 Of life, with vigour undimm'd,  
 With unspent mind, and a soul  
 Unworn, undebased, undecay'd,  
 Mournfully grating, the gates  
 Of the city of death have for ever closed—  
*Him*, I count *him*, well-starr'd.

## EARLY DEATH AND FAME

FOR him who must see many years,  
 I praise the life which slips away  
 Out of the light and mutely ; which avoids

Fame, and her less fair followers, envy, strife,  
 Stupid detraction, jealousy, cabal,  
 Insincere praises ; which descends  
 The quiet mossy track to age.

But, when immature death  
 Beckons too early the guest  
 From the half-tried banquet of life,  
 Young, in the bloom of his days ;  
 Leaves no leisure to press,  
 Slow and surely, the sweets  
 Of a tranquil life in the shade—  
 Fuller for him be the hours !  
 Give him emotion, though pain !  
 Let him live, let him feel : *I have lived.*  
 Heap up his moments with life !  
 Triple his pulses with fame !

### PHILOMELA

HARK ! ah, the nightingale—  
 The tawny-throated !  
 Hark, from that moonlit cedar what a burst !  
 What triumph ! hark !—what pain !

O wanderer from a Grecian shore,  
 Still, after many years, in distant lands,  
 Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain  
 That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-world pain—  
 Say, will it never heal ?  
 And can this fragrant lawn  
 With its cool trees, and night,  
 And the sweet, tranquil Thames,



And moonshine, and the dew,  
To thy rack'd heart and brain  
Afford no balm?

Dost thou to-night behold,  
Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,  
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?  
Dost thou again peruse  
With hot cheeks and sear'd eyes  
The too clear web, and thy dumb sister's shame?  
Dost thou once more assay  
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,  
Poor fugitive, the feathery change  
Once more, and once more seem to make resound  
With love and hate, triumph and agony,  
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?  
Listen, Eugenia—  
How thick the bursts come crowding through the leaves!  
Again—thou hearest?  
Eternal passion!  
Eternal pain!

## URANIA

I too have suffer'd; yet I know  
She is not cold, though she seems so.  
She is not cold, she is not light;  
But our ignoble souls lack might.

She smiles and smiles, and will not sigh,  
While we for hopeless passion die;  
Yet she could love, those eyes declare,  
Were but men nobler than they are.

Eagerly once her gracious ken  
 Was turn'd upon the sons of men ;  
 But light the serious visage grew—  
 She look'd, and smiled, and saw them through.

Our petty souls, our strutting wits,  
 Our labour'd, puny passion-fits—  
 Ah, may she scorn them still, till we  
 Scorn them as bitterly as she !

Yet show her once, ye heavenly Powers,  
 One of some worthier race than ours !  
 One for whose sake she once might prove  
 How deeply she who scorns can love.

His eyes be like the starry lights—  
 His voice like sounds of summer nights—  
 In all his lovely mien let pierce  
 The magic of the universe !

And she to him will reach her hand,  
 And gazing in his eyes will stand,  
 And know her friend, and weep for glee,  
 And cry : *Long, long I've look'd for thee.*

Then will she weep ; with smiles, till then,  
 Coldly she mocks the sons of men.  
 Till then, her lovely eyes maintain  
 Their pure, unwavering, deep disdain.

### EUPHROSYNE

I MUST not say that thou wast true,  
 Yet let me say that thou wast fair ;  
 And they, that lovely face who view,  
 Why should they ask if truth be there ?

Truth—what is truth? Two bleeding hearts,  
 Wounded by men, by fortune tried,  
 Outwearied with their lonely parts,  
 Vow to beat henceforth side by side.

The world to them was stern and drear  
 Their lot was but to weep and moan.  
 Ah, let them keep their faith sincere,  
 For neither could subsist alone !

But souls whom some benignant breath  
 Hath charm'd at birth from gloom and care,  
 These ask no love, these plight no faith,  
 For they are happy as they are.

The world to them may homage make,  
 And garlands for their forehead weave ;  
 And what the world can give, they take—  
 But they bring more than they receive.

They shine upon the world ! Their ears  
 To one demand alone are coy ;  
 They will not give us love and tears,  
 They bring us light and warmth and joy.

It was not love which heaved thy breast,  
 Fair child !—it was the bliss within.  
 Adieu ! and say that one, at least,  
 Was just to what he did not win.

### CALAIS SANDS

A THOUSAND knights have rein'd their steeds  
 To watch this line of sand-hills run,  
 Along the never-silent Strait,  
 To Calais glittering in the sun ;

To look tow'rd Ardres' Golden Field  
 Across this wide aërial plain,  
 Which glows as if the Middle Age  
 Were gorgeous upon earth again.

Oh, that to share this famous scene,  
 I saw, upon the open sand,  
 Thy lovely presence at my side,  
 Thy shawl, thy look, thy smile, thy hand !

How exquisite thy voice would come,  
 My darling, on this lonely air !  
 How sweetly would the fresh sea-breeze  
 Shake loose some band of soft brown hair !

Yet now my glance but once hath roved  
 O'er Calais and its famous plain ;  
 To England's cliffs my gaze is turn'd,  
 On the blue strait mine eyes I strain.

Thou comest ! Yes ! the vessel's cloud  
 Hangs dark upon the rolling sea.  
 Oh, that yon sea-bird's wings were mine.  
 To win one instant's glimpse of thee !

I must not spring to grasp thy hand,  
 To woo thy smile, to seek thine eye ;  
 But I may stand far off, and gaze,  
 And watch thee pass unconscious by,

And spell thy looks, and guess thy thoughts,  
 Mixt with the idlers on the pier.—  
 Ah, might I always rest unseen,  
 So I might have thee always near !

To-morrow hurry through the fields  
Of Flanders to the storied Rhine !  
To-night those soft-fringed eyes shall close  
Beneath one roof, my queen ! with mine.

## FADED LEAVES

## I. THE RIVER

STILL glides the stream, slow drops the boat  
Under the rustling poplars' shade ;  
Silent the swans beside us float—  
None speaks, none heeds ; ah, turn thy head !

Let those arch eyes now softly shine,  
That mocking mouth grow sweetly bland ;  
Ah, let them rest, those eyes, on mine !  
On mine let rest that lovely hand !

My pent-up tears oppress my brain,  
My heart is swoln with love unsaid.  
Ah, let me weep, and tell my pain,  
And on thy shoulder rest my head !

Before I die—before the soul,  
Which now is mine, must re-attain  
Immunity from my control,  
And wander round the world again ;

Before this teased o'erlabour'd heart  
For ever leaves its vain employ,  
Dead to its deep habitual smart,  
And dead to hopes of future joy.

## 2. TOO LATE

EACH on his own strict line we move,  
 And some find death ere they find love ;  
 So far apart their lives are thrown  
 From the twin soul which halves their own.

And sometimes, by still harder fate,  
 The lovers meet, but meet too late.  
 —Thy heart is mine !—*True, true ! ah, true !*  
 —Then, love, thy hand !—*Ah no ! adieu !*

## 3. SEPARATION

STOP !—not to me, at this bitter departing,  
 Speak of the sure consolations of time !  
 Fresh be the wound, still-renew'd be its smarting,  
 So but thy image endure in its prime.

But, if the stedfast commandment of Nature  
 Wills that remembrance should always decay—  
 If the loved form and the deep-cherish'd feature  
 Must, when unseen, from the soul fade away—

Me let no half-effaced memories cumber !  
 Fled, fled at once, be all vestige of thee !  
 Deep be the darkness and still be the slumber—  
 Dead be the past and its phantoms to me !

Then, when we meet, and thy look strays toward me,  
 Scanning my face and the changes wrought there :  
*Who, let me say, is this stranger regards me,*  
*With the grey eyes, and the lovely brown hair ?*

## 4. ON THE RHINE

VAIN is the effort to forget.  
Some day I shall be cold, I know,  
As is the eternal moonlit snow  
Of the high Alps, to which I go—  
But ah. not yet, not yet !

Vain is the agony of grief.  
'Tis true, indeed, an iron knot  
Ties straitly up from mine thy lot,  
And were it snapt—thou lov'st me not !  
But is despair relief?

Awhile let me with thought have done.  
And as this brimm'd unwrinkled Rhine,  
And that far purple mountain-line,  
Lie sweetly in the look divine  
Of the slow-sinking sun ;

So let me lie, and, calm as they,  
Let beam upon my inward view  
Those eyes of deep, soft, lucent hue—  
Eyes too expressive to be blue,  
Too lovely to be grey.

Ah, Quiet, all things feel thy balm !  
Those blue hills too, this river's flow,  
Were restless once, but long ago.  
Tamed is their turbulent youthful glow ;  
Their joy is in their calm.

## 5. LONGING

COME to me in my dreams, and then  
 By day I shall be well again !  
 For then the night will more than pay  
 The hopeless longing of the day.

Come, as thou can'st a thousand times,  
 A messenger from radiant climes,  
 And smile on thy new world, and be  
 As kind to others as to me !

Or, as thou never can'st in sooth,  
 Come now, and let me dream it truth ;  
 And part my hair, and kiss my brow,  
 And say : *My love ! why sufferest thou ?*

Come to me in my dreams, and then  
 By day I shall be well again !  
 For then the night will more than pay  
 The hopeless longing of the day.

## DESPONDENCY

THE thoughts that rain their steady glow  
 Like stars on life's cold sea,  
 Which others know, or say they know—  
 They never shone for me.

Thoughts light, like gleams, my spirit's sky,  
 But they will not remain.  
 They light me once, they hurry by ;  
 And never come again.



## SELF-DECEPTION

SAY, what blinds us, that we claim the glory  
 Of possessing powers not our share?  
 —Since man woke on earth, he knows his story,  
 But, before we woke on earth, we were.

Long, long since, undower'd yet, our spirit  
 Roam'd, ere birth, the treasures of God;  
 Saw the gifts, the powers it might inherit,  
 Ask'd an outfit for its earthly road.

Then, as now, this tremulous, eager being  
 Strain'd and long'd and grasp'd each gift it saw;  
 Then, as now, a Power beyond our seeing  
 Staved us back, and gave our choice the law.

Ah, whose hand that day through Heaven guided  
 Man's new spirit, since it was not we?

Ah, who sway'd our choice, and who decided  
 What our gifts, and what our wants should be?

For, alas! he left us each retaining  
 Shreds of gifts which he refused in full.  
 Still these waste us with their hopeless straining,  
 Still the attempt to use them proves them null.

And on earth we wander, groping, reeling;  
 Powers stir in us, stir and disappear.

Ah! and he, who placed our master-feeling,  
 Fail'd to place that master-feeling clear.

We but dream we have our wish'd-for powers,  
 Ends we seek we never shall attain.

Ah! *some* power exists there, which is ours?  
*Some* end is there, we indeed may gain?

## DOVER BEACH

THE sea is calm to-night.  
 The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
 Upon the straits ;—on the French coast the light  
 Gleams and is gone ; the cliffs of England stand,  
 Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  
 Come to the window, sweet is the night-air !  
 Only, from the long line of spray  
 Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,  
 Listen ! you hear the grating roar  
 Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
 At their return, up the high strand,  
 Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
 With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
 The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago  
 Heard it on the Ægæan, and it brought  
 Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
 Of human misery ; we  
 Find also in the sound a thought,  
 Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith  
 Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
 Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.  
 But now I only hear  
 Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
 Retreating, to the breath  
 Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
 And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true  
 To one another ! for the world, which seems  
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
 So various, so beautiful, so new,  
 Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain ;  
 And we are here as on a darkling plain  
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
 Where ignorant armies clash by night.

## GROWING OLD

WHAT is it to grow old ?  
 Is it to lose the glory of the form,  
 The lustre of the eye ?  
 Is it for beauty to forego her wreath ?  
 —Yes, but not this alone.

Is it to feel our strength—  
 Not our bloom only, but our strength—decay ?  
 Is it to feel each limb  
 Grow stiffer, every function less exact,  
 Each nerve more loosely strung ?

Yes, this, and more ; but not  
 Ah, 'tis not what in youth we dream'd 'twould be !  
 'Tis not to have our life  
 Mellow'd and soften'd as with sunset-glow,  
 A golden day's decline.

'Tis not to see the world  
 As from a height, with rapt prophetic eyes,  
 And heart profoundly stirr'd ;

And weep, and feel the fulness of the past,  
The years that are no more.

It is to spend long days  
And not once feel that we were ever young ;  
It is to add, immured  
In the hot prison of the present, month  
To month with weary pain.

It is to suffer this,  
And feel but half, and feebly, what we feel,  
Deep in our hidden heart  
Festers the dull remembrance of a change,  
But no emotion—none.

It is—last stage of all—  
When we are frozen up within, and quite  
The phantom of ourselves,  
To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost  
Which blamed the living man.

## THE PROGRESS OF POESY

### A VARIATION

YOUTH rambles on life's arid mount,  
And strikes the rock, and finds the vein,  
And brings the water from the fount,  
The fount which shall not flow again.

The man mature with labour chops  
For the bright stream a channel grand,  
And sees not that the sacred drops  
Ran off and vanish'd out of hand.

And then the old man totters nigh,  
 And feebly rakes among the stones.  
 The mount is mute, the channel dry ;  
 And down he lays his weary bones.

## NEW ROME

LINES WRITTEN FOR MISS STORY'S ALBUM

THE armless Vatican Cupid  
 Hangs down his beautiful head ;  
 For the priests have got him in prison,  
 And Psyche long has been dead.

But see, his shaven oppressors  
 Begin to quake and disband !  
 And *The Times*, that bright Apollo,  
 Proclaims salvation at hand.

“ And what,” cries Cupid, “ will save us ? ”  
 Says Apollo : “ *Modernise Rome !*  
 What inns ! Your streets, too, how narrow !  
 Too much of palace and dome !

“ O learn of London, whose paupers  
 Are not pushed out by the swells !  
 Wide streets with fine double trottoirs ;  
 And then—the London hotels ! ”

The armless Vatican Cupid  
 Hangs down his head as before.  
 Through centuries past it has hung so,  
 And will through centuries more.

## PIS-ALLER

“MAN is blind because of sin,  
 Revelation makes him sure ;  
 Without that, who looks within,  
 Looks in vain, for all's obscure.”

Nay, look closer into man !  
 Tell me, can you find indeed  
 Nothing sure, no moral plan  
 Clear prescribed, without your creed ?

“ No, I nothing can perceive !  
 Without that, all's dark for men.  
 That, or nothing, I believe.”—  
 For God's sake, believe it then !

## THE LAST WORD

CREEP into thy narrow bed,  
 Creep, and let no more be said !  
 Vain thy onset ! all stands fast.  
 Thou thyself must break at last.

Let the long contention cease !  
 Geese are swans, and swans are geese.  
 Let them have it how they will !  
 Thou art tired ; best be still.

They out-talk'd thee, hiss'd thee, tore thee ?  
 Better men fared thus before thee ;  
 Fired their ringing shot and pass'd,  
 Hotly charged—and sank at last.

Charge once more, then, and be dumb !  
 Let the victors, when they come,  
 When the forts of folly fall,  
 Find thy body by the wall !

## THE LORD'S MESSENGERS

THUS saith the Lord to his own :—

“ See ye the trouble below ?

Warfare of man from his birth !

Too long let we them groan ;

Haste, arise ye, and go,

Carry my peace upon earth ! ”

Gladly they rise at his call,

Gladly obey his command,

Gladly descend to the plain.

—Ah ! How few of them all,

Those willing servants, shall stand

In the Master's presence again !

Some in the tumult are lost ;

Baffled, bewilder'd, they stray.

Some, as prisoners, draw breath.

Some, unconquer'd, are cross'd

(Not yet half through the day)

By a pitiless arrow of Death.

Hardly, hardly shall one

Come, with countenance bright,

At the close of day, from the plain ;

His Master's errand well done,

Safe through the smoke of the fight,

Back to his Master again.

## A NAMELESS EPITAPH

ASK not my name, O friend !  
 That Being only, which hath known each man  
 From the beginning, can  
 Remember each unto the end.

## BACCHANALIA ;

OR,

## THE NEW AGE

## I

THE evening comes, the fields are still.  
 The tinkle of the thirsty rill,  
 Unheard all day, ascends again ;  
 Deserted is the half-mown plain,  
 Silent the swaths ! the ringing wain,  
 The mower's cry, the dog's alarms,  
 All housed within the sleeping farms !  
 The business of the day is done,  
 The last-left haymaker is gone.  
 And from the thyme upon the height,  
 And from the elder-blossom white  
 And pale dog-roses in the hedge,  
 And from the mint-plant in the sedge,  
 In puffs of balm the night-air blows  
 The perfume which the day forgoes.  
 And on the pure horizon far,  
 See, pulsing with the first-born star,  
 The liquid sky above the hill !  
 The evening comes, the fields are still.



Loitering and leaping,  
 With saunter, with bounds—  
 Flickering and circling  
 In files and in rounds—  
 Gaily their pine-staff green  
 Tossing in air,  
 Loose o'er their shoulders white  
 Showering their hair—  
 See! the wild Mænads  
 Break from the wood,  
 Youth and Iacchus  
 Maddening their blood.  
 See! through the quiet land  
 Rioting they pass—  
 Fling the fresh heaps about,  
 Trample the grass.  
 Tear from the rifled hedge  
 Garlands, their prize ;  
 Fill with their sports the field,  
 Fill with their cries.

Shepherd, what ails thee, then ?  
 Shepherd, why mute ?  
 Forth with thy joyous song !  
 Forth with thy flute !  
 Tempts not the revel blithe ?  
 Lure not their cries ?  
 Glow not their shoulders smooth ?  
 Melt not their eyes ?  
 Is not, on cheeks like those,  
 Lovely the flush ?  
*—Ah, so the quiet was !*  
*So was the hush !*

## II

The epoch ends, the world is still.  
The age has talk'd and work'd its fill—  
The famous orators have shone,  
The famous poets sung and gone,  
The famous men of war have fought,  
The famous speculators thought,  
The famous players, sculptors, wrought,  
The famous painters fill'd their wall,  
The famous critics judged it all.  
The combatants are parted now—  
Uphung the spear, unbent the bow,  
The puissant crown'd, the weak laid low.  
And in the after-silence sweet,  
Now strifes are hush'd, our ears doth meet,  
Ascending pure, the bell-like fame  
Of this or that down-trodden name  
Delicate spirits, push'd away  
In the hot press of the noon-day.  
And o'er the plain, where the dead age  
Did its now silent warfare wage—  
O'er that wide plain, now wrapt in gloom,  
Where many a splendour finds its tomb,  
Many spent fames and fallen might—  
The one or two immortal lights  
Rise slowly up into the sky  
To shine there everlastingly,  
Like stars over the bounding hill.  
The epoch ends, the world is still.

Thundering and bursting  
In torrents, in waves—

Carolling and shouting  
Over tombs, amid graves—  
See ! on the cumber'd plain  
Clearing a stage,  
Scattering the past about,  
Comes the new age.  
Bards make new poems,  
Thinkers new schools,  
Statesmen new systems,  
Critics new rules.  
All things begin again ;  
Life is their prize ;  
Earth with their deeds they fill,  
Fill with their cries.

Poet, what ails thee, then ?  
Say, why so mute ?  
Forth with thy praising voice !  
Forth with thy flute !  
Loiterer ! why sittest thou  
Sunk in thy dream ?  
Tempt not the bright new age ?  
Shines not its stream ?  
Look, ah, what genius,  
Art, science, wit !  
Soldiers like Cæsar,  
Statesmen like Pitt !  
Sculptors like Phidias,  
Raphaels in shoals,  
Poets like Shakespeare—  
Beautiful souls !  
See, on their glowing cheeks  
Heavenly the flush !

—*Ah, so the silence was !  
So was the hush !*

The world but feels the present's spell,  
The poet feels the past as well ;  
Whatever men have done, might do,  
Whatever thought, might think it too.

## EPILOGUE

### TO LESSING'S LAOCOÖN

ONE morn as through Hyde Park we walk'd,  
My friend and I, by chance we talk'd  
Of Lessing's famed Laocoön ;  
And after we awhile had gone  
In Lessing's track, and tried to see  
What painting is, what poetry—  
Diverging to another thought,  
“ Ah,” cries my friend, “ but who hath taught  
Why music and the other arts  
Oftener perform aright their parts  
Than poetry ? why she, than they,  
Fewer fine successes can display ?

“ For 'tis so, surely ! Even in Greece,  
Where best the poet framed his piece,  
Even in that Phœbus-guarded ground  
Pausanias on his travels found  
Good poems, if he look'd, more rare  
(Though many) than good statues were—  
For these, in truth, were everywhere.  
Of bards full many a stroke divine

In Dante's, Petrarch's, Tasso's line,  
The land of Ariosto show'd ;  
And yet, e'en there, the canvas glow'd  
With triumphs, a yet ampler brood,  
Of Raphael and his brotherhood.  
And nobly perfect, in our day  
Of haste, half-work, and disarray,  
Profound yet touching, sweet yet strong,  
Hath risen Goethe's, Wordsworth's song ;  
Yet even I (and none will bow  
Deeper to these) must needs allow,  
They yield us not, to soothe our pains,  
Such multitude of heavenly strains  
As from the kings of sound are blown,  
Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn."

While thus my friend discoursed, we pass  
Out of the path, and take the grass.  
The grass had still the green of May,  
And still the unblacken'd elms were gay ;  
The kine were resting in the shade,  
The flies a summer-murmur made.  
Bright was the morn and south the air ;  
The soft-couch'd cattle were as fair  
As those which pastured by the sea,  
That old-world morn, in Sicily,  
When on the beach the Cyclops lay,  
And Galatea from the bay  
Mock'd her poor lovelorn giant's lay.  
" Behold," I said, " the painter's sphere !  
The limits of his art appear.  
The passing group, the summer-morn,  
The grass, the elms, that blossom'd thorn—

Those cattle couch'd, or, as they rise,  
 Their shining flanks, their liquid eyes—  
 These, or much greater things, but caught  
 Like these, and in one aspect brought !  
 In outward semblance he must give  
 A moment's life of things that live ;  
 Then let him choose his moment well,  
 With power divine its story tell."

Still we walk'd on, in thoughtful mood,  
 And now upon the bridge we stood.  
 Full of sweet breathings was the air,  
 Of sudden stirs and pauses fair.  
 Down o'er the stately bridge the breeze  
 Came rustling from the garden-trees  
 And on the sparkling waters play'd ;  
 Light-plashing waves an answer made,  
 And mimic boats their haven near'd.  
 Beyond, the Abbey-towers appear'd,  
 By mist and chimneys unconfined,  
 Free to the sweep of light and wind ;  
 While through their earth-moor'd nave below  
 Another breath of wind doth blow,  
 Sound as of wandering breeze—but sound  
 In laws by human artists bound.  
 "The world of music !" I exclaim'd :—  
 "This breeze that rustles by, that famed  
 Abbey recall it ! what a sphere  
 Large and profound, hath genius here !  
 The inspired musician what a range,  
 What power of passion, wealth of change !  
 Some source of feeling he must choose  
 And its lock'd fount of beauty use,

And through the stream of music tell  
 Its else unutterable spell ;  
 To choose it rightly is his part,  
 And press into its inmost heart.

*“ Miserere, Domine !*

The words are utter'd, and they flee.  
 Deep is their penitential moan,  
 Mighty their pathos, but 'tis gone.  
 They have declared the spirit's sore  
 Sore load, and words can do no more.  
 Beethoven takes them then—those two  
 Poor, bounded words—and makes them new ;  
 Infinite makes them, makes them young ;  
 Transplants them to another tongue,  
 Where they can now, without constraint,  
 Pour all the soul of their complaint,  
 And roll adown a channel large  
 The wealth divine they have in charge.  
 Page after page of music turn,  
 And still they live and still they burn,  
 Eternal, passion-fraught, and free—  
*Miserere, Domine !”*

Onward we moved, and reach'd the Ride  
 Where gaily flows the human tide.  
 Afar, in rest the cattle lay ;  
 We heard, afar, faint music play ;  
 But agitated, brisk, and near,  
 Men, with their stream of life, were here.  
 Some hang upon the rails, and some  
 On foot behind them go and come.  
 This through the Ride upon his steed  
 Goes slowly by, and this at speed.

The young, the happy, and the fair,  
 The old, the sad, the worn, were there ;  
 Some vacant, and some musing went,  
 And some in talk and merriment.  
 Nods, smiles, and greetings, and farewells !  
 And now and then, perhaps, there swells  
 A sigh, a tear—but in the throng  
 All changes fast, and hies along.  
 Hies, ah, from whence, what native ground ?  
 And to what goal, what ending, bound ?  
 “ Behold, at last the poet’s sphere !  
 But who,” I said, “ suffices here ?

“ For, ah ! so much he has to do ;  
 Be painter and musician too !  
 The aspect of the moment show,  
 The feeling of the moment know !  
 The aspect not, I grant, express  
 Clear as the painter’s art can dress ;  
 The feeling not, I grant, explore  
 So deep as the musician’s lore—  
 But clear as words can make revealing,  
 And deep as words can follow feeling.  
 But, ah ! then comes his sorest spell  
 Of toil—he must life’s *movement* tell !  
 The thread which binds it all in one,  
 And not its separate parts alone.  
 The *movement* he must tell of life,  
 Its pain and pleasure, rest and strife ;  
 His eye must travel down, at full,  
 The long, unpausing spectacle ;  
 With faithful unrelaxing force  
 Attend it from its primal source,



From change to change and year to year  
Attend it of its mid career,  
Attend it to the last repose  
And solemn silence of its close.

“The cattle rising from the grass  
His thought must follow where they pass ;  
The penitent with anguish bow'd  
His thought must follow through the crowd.  
Yes ! all this eddying, motley throng  
That sparkles in the sun along,  
Girl, statesman, merchant, soldier bold,  
Master and servant, young and old,  
Grave, gay, child, parent, husband, wife,  
He follows home, and lives their life.

“And many, many are the souls  
Life's movement fascinates, controls ;  
It draws them on, they cannot save  
Their feet from its alluring wave ;  
They cannot leave it, they must go  
With its unconquerable flow.  
But ah ! how few, of all that try  
This mighty march, do aught but die !  
For ill-endow'd for such a way,  
Ill-stored in strength, in wits, are they.  
They faint, they stagger to and fro,  
And wandering from the stream they go ;  
In pain, in terror, in distress,  
They see, all round, a wilderness.  
Sometimes a momentary gleam  
They catch of the mysterious stream ;  
Sometimes, a second's space, their ear  
The murmur of its waves doth hear.

That transient glimpse in song they say,  
 But not as painter can pourtray—  
 That transient sound in song they tell,  
 But not, as the musician, well.  
 And when at last their snatches cease,  
 And they are silent and at peace,  
 The stream of life's majestic whole  
 Hath ne'er been mirror'd on their soul.

“ Only a few the life-stream's shore  
 With safe unwandering feet explore ;  
 Untired its movement bright attend,  
 Follow its windings to the end.  
 'Then from its brimming waves their eye  
 Drinks up delighted ecstasy,  
 And its deep-toned, melodious voice  
 For ever makes their ear rejoice.  
 They speak ! the happiness divine  
 They feel, runs o'er in every line ;  
 Its spell is round them like a shower—  
 It gives them pathos, gives them power.  
 No painter yet hath such a way,  
 Nor no musician made, as they,  
 And gather'd on immortal knolls  
 Such lovely flowers for cheering souls.  
 Beethoven, Raphael, cannot reach  
 The charm which Homer, Shakespeare, teach.  
 To these, to these, their thankful race  
 Gives, then, the first, the fairest place ;  
 And brightest is their glory's sheen,  
 For greatest hath their labour been.”

## PERSISTENCY OF POETRY

THOUGH the Muse be gone away,  
Though she move not earth to-day,  
Souls, erewhile who caught her word,  
Ah! still harp on what they heard.

## A CAUTION TO POETS

WHAT poets feel not, when they make,  
A pleasure in creating,  
The world, in *its* turn, will not take  
Pleasure in contemplating.

## THE YOUTH OF NATURE

RAISED are the dripping oars,  
Silent the boat! the lake,  
Lovely and soft as a dream,  
Swims in the sheen of the moon.  
The mountains stand at its head  
Clear in the pure June-night,  
But the valleys are flooded with haze.  
Rydal and Fairfield are there;  
In the shadow Wordsworth lies dead.  
So it is, so it will be for aye.  
Nature is fresh as of old,  
Is lovely; a mortal is dead.

The spots which recall him survive,  
For he lent a new life to these hills.  
The Pillar still broods o'er the fields

Which border Ennerdale Lake,  
And Egremont sleeps by the sea.  
The gleam of The Evening Star  
Twinkles on Grasmere no more,  
But ruin'd and solemn and grey  
The sheepfold of Michael survives ;  
And, far to the south, the heath  
Still blows in the Quantock coombs,  
By the favourite waters of Ruth.  
These survive !—yet not without pain,  
Pain and dejection to-night,  
Can I feel that their poet is gone.

He grew old in an age he condemn'd.  
He look'd on the rushing decay  
Of the times which had shelter'd his youth  
Felt the dissolving throes  
Of a social order he loved ;  
Outlived his brethren, his peers ;  
And, like the Theban seer,  
Died in his enemies' day.

Cold bubbled the spring of Tilphusa,  
Copais lay bright in the moon,  
Helicon glass'd in the lake  
Its firs, and afar rose the peaks  
Of Parnassus, snowily clear ;  
Thebes was behind him in flames,  
And the clang of arms in his ear,  
When his awe-struck captors led  
The Theban seer to the spring.  
Tiresias drank and died.  
Nor did reviving Thebes  
See such a prophet again.

Well may we mourn, when the head  
Of a sacred poet lies low  
In an age which can rear them no more !  
The complaining millions of men  
Darken in labour and pain ;  
But he was a priest to us all  
Of the wonder and bloom of the world,  
Which we saw with his eyes, and were glad.  
He is dead, and the fruit-bearing day  
Of his race is past on the earth ;  
And darkness returns to our eyes.

For, oh ! is it you, is it you,  
Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,  
And mountains, that fill us with joy,  
Or the poet who sings you so well ?  
Is it you, O beauty, O grace,  
O charm, O romance, that we feel,  
Or the voice which reveals what you are ?  
Are ye, like daylight and sun,  
Shared and rejoiced in by all ?  
Or are ye immersed in the mass  
Of matter, and hard to extract,  
Or sunk at the core of the world  
Too deep for the most to discern ?  
Like stars in the deep of the sky,  
Which arise on the glass of the sage,  
But are lost when their watcher is gone.

“ They are here ”—I heard, as men heard  
In Mysian Ida the voice  
Of the Mighty Mother, or Crete,  
The murmur of Nature reply—

" Loveliness, magic, and grace,  
 They are here ! they are set in the world,  
 They abide ; and the finest of souls  
 Hath not been thrill'd by them all,  
 Nor the dullest been dead to them quite.  
 The poet who sings them may die,  
 But they are immortal and live,  
 For they are the life of the world.  
 Will ye not learn it, and know,  
 When ye mourn that a poet is dead,  
 That the singer was less than his themes,  
 Life, and emotion, and I ?

" More than the singer are these.  
 Weak is the tremor of pain  
 That thrills in his mournfullest chord  
 To that which once ran through his soul.  
 Cold the elation of joy  
 In his gladdest, airiest song,  
 To that which of old in his youth  
 Fill'd him and made him divine.  
 Hardly his voice at its best  
 Gives us a sense of the awe,  
 The vastness, the grandeur, the gloom  
 Of the unlit gulph of himself.

" Ye know not yourselves ; and your bards—  
 The clearest, the best, who have read  
 Most in themselves—have beheld  
 Less than they left unreveal'd.  
 Ye express not yourselves ;—can you make  
 With marble, with colour, with word,  
 What charm'd you in others re-live ?  
 Can thy pencil, O artist ! restore

The figure, the bloom of thy love,  
 As she was in her morning of spring?  
 Canst thou paint the ineffable smile  
 Of her eyes as they rested on thine?  
 Can the image of life have the glow,  
 The motion of life itself?

“Yourselves and your fellows ye know not; and me,  
 The mateless, the one, will ye know?  
 Will ye scan me, and read me, and tell  
 Of the thoughts that ferment in my breast,  
 My longing, my sadness, my joy?  
 Will ye claim for your great ones the gift  
 To have render'd the gleam of my skies,  
 To have echoed the moan of my seas,  
 Utter'd the voice of my hills?  
 When your great ones depart, will ye say:  
*All things have suffer'd a loss,*  
*Nature is hid in their grave?*

“Race after race, man after man,  
 Have thought that my secret was theirs,  
 Have dream'd that I lived but for them,  
 That they were my glory and joy.  
 —They are dust, they are changed, they are gone!  
 I remain.”

## THE YOUTH OF MAN

WE, O Nature, depart,  
 Thou survivest us! this,  
 This, I know, is the law.  
 Yes! but more than this,  
 Thou who seest us die

Seest us change while we live ;  
Seest our dreams, one by one,  
Seest our errors depart ;  
Watchest us, Nature ! throughout,  
Mild and inscrutably calm.

Well for us that we change !  
Well for us that the power  
Which in our morning-prime  
Saw the mistakes of our youth,  
Sweet, and forgiving, and good,  
Sees the contrition of age !

Behold, O Nature, this pair !  
See them to-night where they stand,  
Not with the halo of youth  
Crowning their brows with its light,  
Not with the sunshine of hope,  
Not with the rapture of spring,  
Which they had of old, when they stood  
Years ago at my side  
In this self-same garden, and said :  
“ We are young, and the world is ours ;  
Man, man is the king of the world !  
Fools that these mystics are  
Who prate of Nature ! for she  
Hath neither beauty, nor warmth,  
Nor life, nor emotion, nor power.  
But man has a thousand gifts,  
And the generous dreamer invests  
The senseless world with them all.  
Nature is nothing ; her charm  
Lives in our eyes which can paint,  
Lives in our hearts which can feel.”



Thou, O Nature, wast mute,  
Mute as of old ! days flew,  
Days and years ; and Time  
With the ceaseless stroke of his wings  
Brush'd off the bloom from their soul.  
Clouded and dim grew their eye,  
Languid their heart—for youth  
Quicken'd its pulses no more.  
Slowly, within the walls  
Of an ever-narrowing world,  
They droop'd, they grew blind, they grew old.  
Thee and their youth in thee,  
Nature ! they saw no more.

Murmur of living,  
Stir of existence,  
Soul of the world !  
Make, oh, make yourselves felt  
To the dying spirit of youth !  
Come, like the breath of the spring !  
Leave not a human soul  
To grow old in darkness and pain !  
Only the living can feel you,  
But leave us not while we live !

Here they stand to-night—  
Here, where this grey balustrade  
Crowns the still valley ; behind  
Is the castled house, with its woods,  
Which shelter'd their childhood—the sun  
On its ivied windows ; a scent  
From the grey-wall'd gardens, a breath  
Of the fragrant stock and the pink,

Perfumes the evening air.  
 Their children play on the lawns.  
 They stand and listen ; they hear  
 The children's shouts, and at times,  
 Faintly, the bark of a dog  
 From a distant farm in the hills.  
 Nothing besides ! in front  
 The wide, wide valley outspreads  
 To the dim horizon, reposed  
 In the twilight, and bathed in dew,  
 Corn-field and hamlet and copse  
 Darkening fast ; but a light,  
 Far off, a glory of day,  
 Still plays on the city spires ;  
 And there in the dusk by the walls,  
 With the grey mist marking its course  
 Through the silent, flowery land,  
 On, to the plains, to the sea,  
 Floats the imperial stream.

Well I know what they feel !  
 They gaze, and the evening wind  
 Plays on their faces ; they gaze—  
 Airs from the Eden of youth  
 Awake and stir in their soul ;  
 The past returns—they feel  
 What they are, alas ! what they were.  
 They, not Nature, are changed.  
 Well I know what they feel !

Hush, for tears  
 Begin to steal to their eyes !  
 Hush, for fruit  
 Grows from such sorrow as theirs !

And they remember,  
 With piercing, untold anguish,  
 The proud boasting of their youth.  
 And they feel how Nature was fair.  
 And the mists of delusion,  
 And the scales of habit,  
 Fall away from their eyes ;  
 And they see, for a moment,  
 Stretching out, like the desert  
 In its weary, unprofitable length,  
 Their faded, ignoble lives.

While the locks are yet brown on thy head,  
 While the soul still looks through thine eyes,  
 While the heart still pours  
 The mantling blood to thy cheek,  
 Sink, O youth, in thy soul !  
 Yearn to the greatness of Nature ;  
 Rally the good in the depths of thyself !

## PALLADIUM

SET where the upper streams of Simois flow  
 Was the Palladium, high 'mid rock and wood ;  
 And Hector was in Ilium, far below,  
 And fought, and saw it not—but there it stood !  
 It stood, and sun and moonshine rain'd their light  
 On the pure columns of its glen-built hall.  
 Backward and forward roll'd the waves of fight  
 Round Troy—but while this stood, Troy could not fall.  
 So, in its lovely moonlight, lives the soul.  
 Mountains surround it, and sweet virgin air ;

Cold plashing, past it, crystal waters roll ;  
 We visit it by moments, ah, too rare !

We shall renew the battle in the plain  
 To-morrow ;—red with blood will Xanthus be ;  
 Hector and Ajax will be there again,  
 Helen will come upon the wall to see.

Then we shall rust in shade, or shine in strife,  
 And fluctuate 'twixt blind hopes and blind despairs,  
 And fancy that we put forth all our life,  
 And never know how with the soul it fares.

Still doth the soul, from its lone fastness high,  
 Upon our life a ruling effluence send.  
 And when it fails, fight as we will, we die ;  
 And while it lasts, we cannot wholly end.

## PROGRESS

THE Master stood upon the mount, and taught.  
 He saw a fire in his disciples' eyes ;  
 " The old law," they cried, " is wholly come to nought,  
     Behold the new world rise !"

" Was it," the Lord then said, " with scorn ye saw  
 The old law observed by Scribes and Pharisees ?  
 I say unto you, see ye keep that law  
     More faithfully than these !

" Too hasty heads for ordering worlds, alas !  
 Think not that I to annul the law have will'd ;  
 No jot, no tittle from the law shall pass,  
     Till all have been fulfill'd."

So Christ said eighteen hundred years ago.  
 And what then shall be said to those to-day,  
 Who cry aloud to lay the old world low  
 To clear the new world's way?

“Religious fervours! ardour misapplied!  
 Hence, hence,” they cry, “ye do but keep man blind!  
 But keep him self-immersed, preoccupied,  
 And lame the active mind!”

Ah! from the old world let some one answer give:  
 “Scorn ye this world, their tears, their inward cares?  
 I say unto you, see that *your* souls live  
 A deeper life than theirs!

“Say ye: ‘The spirit of man has found new roads,  
 And we must leave the old faiths, and walk therein’?—  
 Leave then the Cross as ye have left carved gods,  
 But guard the fire within!

“Bright else and fast the stream of life may roll,  
 And no man may the other's hurt behold;  
 Yet each will have one anguish—his own soul  
 Which perishes of cold.”

Here let that voice make end; then, let a strain,  
 From a far lonelier distance, like the wind  
 Be heard, floating through heaven, and fill again  
 These men's profoundest mind:

“Children of men! the unseen Power, whose eye  
 For ever doth accompany mankind,  
 Hath look'd on no religion scornfully  
 That men did ever find.

“Which has not taught weak wills how much they can?  
 Which has not fall'n on the dry heart like rain?

Which has not cried to sunk, self-weary man :

*Thou must be born again !*

“Children of men ! not that your age excel  
 In pride of life the ages of your sires,  
 But that ye think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well,  
 The Friend of man desires.”

## REVOLUTIONS

BEFORE man parted for this earthly strand,  
 While yet upon the verge of heaven he stood,  
 God put a heap of letters in his hand,  
 And bade him make with them what word he could.

And man has turn'd them many times ; made Greece,  
 Rome, England, France ;—yes, nor in vain essay'd  
 Way after way, changes that never cease !  
 The letters have combined, something was made.

But ah ! an inextinguishable sense  
 Haunts him that he has not made what he should ;  
 That he has still, though old, to recommence,  
 Since he has not yet found the word God would.

And empire after empire, at their height  
 Of sway, have felt this boding sense come on ;  
 Have felt their huge frames not constructed right,  
 And droop'd, and slowly died upon their throne.

One day, thou say'st, there will at last appear  
 The word, the order, which God meant should be.  
 —Ah ! we shall know *that* well when it comes near ;  
 The band will quit man's heart, he will breathe free.

## SELF-DEPENDENCE

WEARY of myself, and sick of asking  
 What I am, and what I ought to be,  
 At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me  
 Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire  
 O'er the sea and to the stars I send :  
 "Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me,  
 Calm me, ah, compose me to the end !

"Ah, once more," I cried, "ye stars, ye waters,  
 On my heart your mighty charm renew ;  
 Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,  
 Feel my soul becoming vast like you !"

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,  
 Over the lit sea's unquiet way,  
 In the rustling night-air came the answer :  
 "Wouldst thou *be* as these are? *Live* as they.

"Unaffrighted by the silence round them,  
 Undistracted by the sights they see,  
 These demand not that the things without them  
 Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

"And with joy the stars perform their shining,  
 And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll ;  
 For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting  
 All the fever of some differing soul.

"Bounded by themselves, and unregardful  
 In what state God's other works may be,  
 In their own tasks all their powers pouring,  
 These attain the mighty life you see."

O air-born voice ! long since, severely clear,  
 A cry like thine in mine own heart I hear :  
 “ Resolve to be thyself ; and know that he,  
 Who finds himself, loses his misery ! ”

### MORALITY

We cannot kindle when we will  
 The fire which in the heart resides ;  
 The spirit bloweth and is still,  
 In mystery our soul abides.  
     But tasks in hours of insight will'd  
     Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

With aching hands and bleeding feet  
 We dig and heap, lay stone on stone ;  
 We bear the burden and the heat  
 Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.  
     Not till the hours of light return,  
     All we have built do we discern.

Then, when the clouds are off the soul,  
 When thou dost bask in Nature's eye,  
 Ask, how *she* view'd thy self-control,  
 Thy struggling, task'd morality—  
     Nature, whose free, light, cheerful air,  
     Oft made thee, in thy gloom, despair.

And she, whose censure thou dost dread,  
 Whose eye thou wast afraid to seek,  
 See, on her face a glow is spread,  
 A strong emotion on her cheek !  
     “ Ah, child ! ” she cries, “ that strife divine,  
     Whence was it, for it is not mine ? ”



“There is no effort on *my* brow—  
 I do not strive, I do not weep ;  
 I rush with the swift spheres and glow  
 In joy, and when I will, I sleep.

Yet that severe, that earnest air,  
 I saw, I felt it once—but where ?

“I knew not yet the gauge of time,  
 Nor wore the manacles of space ;  
 I felt it in some other clime,  
 I saw it in some other place.

’Twas when the heavenly house I trod,  
 And lay upon the breast of God.”

## A SUMMER NIGHT

IN the deserted, moon-blanch’d street,  
 How lonely rings the echo of my feet !  
 Those windows, which I gaze at, frown,  
 Silent and white, unopening down,  
 Repellent as the world ;—but see,  
 A break between the housetops shows  
 The moon ! and, lost behind her, fading dim  
 Into the dewy dark obscurity  
 Down at the far horizon’s rim,  
 Doth a whole tract of heaven disclose !

And to my mind the thought  
 Is on a sudden brought  
 Of a past night, and a far different scene.  
 Headlands stood out into the moonlit deep  
 As clearly as at noon ;  
 The spring-tide’s brimming flow  
 Heaved dazzlingly between ;

Houses, with long white sweep,  
 Girdled the glistening bay ;  
 Behind, through the soft air,  
 The blue haze-cradled mountains spread away,  
 The night was far more fair—  
 But the same restless pacings to and fro,  
 And the same vainly throbbing heart was there,  
 And the same bright, calm moon.

And the calm moonlight seems to say :  
*Hast thou then still the old unquiet breast,  
 Which neither deadens into rest,  
 Nor ever feels the fiery glow  
 That whirls the spirit from itself away,  
 But fluctuates to and fro,  
 Never by passion quite possess'd  
 And never quite benumb'd by the world's sway?—*  
 And I, I know not if to pray  
 Still to be what I am, or yield and be  
 Like all the other men I see.

For most men in a brazen prison live,  
 Where, in the sun's hot eye,  
 With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly  
 Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork give,  
 Dreaming of nought beyond their prison-wall.  
 And as, year after year,  
 Fresh products of their barren labour fall  
 From their tired hands, and rest  
 Never yet comes more near,  
 Gloom settles slowly down over their breast ;  
 And while they try to stem  
 The waves of mournful thought by which they  
 are prest,

Death in their prison reaches them,  
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.

And the rest, a few,  
Escape their prison and depart  
On the wide ocean of life anew.  
There the freed prisoner, where'er his heart  
Listeth, will sail ;  
Nor doth he know how there prevail,  
Despotic on that sea,  
Trade-winds which cross it from eternity.  
Awhile he holds some false way, undebar'd  
By thwarting signs, and braves  
The freshening wind and blackening waves.  
And then the tempest strikes him ; and between  
The lightning-bursts is seen  
Only a driving wreck,  
And the pale master on his spar-strewn deck  
With anguish'd face and flying hair  
Grasping the rudder hard,  
Still bent to make some port he knows not where,  
Still standing for some false, impossible shore.  
And sterner comes the roar  
Of sea and wind, and through the deepening gloom  
Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,  
And he too disappears, and comes no more.

Is there no life, but these alone ?  
Madman or slave, must man be one ?

Plainness and clearness without shadow of stain !  
Clearness divine !  
Ye heavens, whose pure dark regions have no sign  
Of languor, though so calm, and, though so great,

Are yet untroubled and unpassionate ;  
 Who, though so noble, share in the world's toil,  
 And, though so task'd, keep free from dust and soil !  
 I will not say that your mild deeps retain  
 A tinge, it may be, of their silent pain  
 Who have long'd deeply once, and long'd in vain—  
 But I will rather say that you remain  
 A world above man's head, to let him see  
 How boundless might his soul's horizons be,  
 How vast, yet of what clear transparency !  
 How it were good to abide there, and breathe free ;  
 How fair a lot to fill  
 Is left to each man still !

### THE BURIED LIFE

LIGHT flows our war of mocking words, and yet,  
 Behold, with tears mine eyes are wet !  
 I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.  
 Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,  
 We know, we know that we can smile !  
 But there's a something in this breast,  
 To which thy light words bring no rest.  
 And thy gay smiles no anodyne.  
 Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,  
 And turn those limpid eyes on mine,  
 And let me read there, love ! thy inmost soul.

Alas ! is even love too weak  
 To unlock the heart, and let it speak ?  
 Are even lovers powerless to reveal  
 To one another what indeed they feel ?

I knew the mass of men conceal'd  
 Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal'd  
 They would by other men be met  
 With blank indifference, or with blame reprov'd ;  
 I knew they lived and moved  
 Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest  
 Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet  
 The same heart beats in every human breast !

But we, my love !—doth a like spell benumb  
 Our hearts, our voices ?—must we too be dumb ?

Ah ! well for us, if even we,  
 Even for a moment, can get free  
 Our heart, and have our lips unchain'd ;  
 For that which seals them hath been deep-ordain'd !

Fate, which foresaw  
 How frivolous a baby man would be—  
 By what distractions he would be possess'd,  
 How he would pour himself in every strife,  
 And well-nigh change his own identity—  
 That it might keep from his capricious play  
 His genuine self, and force him to obey  
 Even in his own despite his being's law,  
 Bade through the deep recesses of our breast —  
 The unregarded river of our life  
 Pursue with indiscernible flow its way ;  
 And that we should not see  
 The buried stream, and seem to be  
 Eddying at large in blind uncertainty,  
 Though driving on with it eternally.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,  
 But often, in the din of strife,

There rises an unspeakable desire  
 After the knowledge of our buried life ;  
 A thirst to spend our fire and restless force  
 In tracking out our true, original course ;  
 A longing to inquire  
 Into the mystery of this heart which beats  
 So wild, so deep in us—to know  
 Whence our lives come and where they go.  
 And many a man in his own breast then delves,  
 But deep enough, alas ! none ever mines.  
 And we have been on many thousand lines,  
 And we have shown, on each, spirit and power ;  
 But hardly have we, for one little hour,  
 Been on our own line, have we been ourselves—  
 Hardly had skill to utter one of all  
 The nameless feelings that course through our breast,  
 But they course on for ever unexpress'd.  
 And long we try in vain to speak and act  
 Our hidden self, and what we say and do  
 Is eloquent, is well—but 'tis not true !  
 And then we will no more be rack'd  
 With inward striving, and demand  
 Of all the thousand nothings of the hour  
 Their stupefying power ;  
 Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call !  
 Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,  
 From the soul's subterranean depth upborne  
 As from an infinitely distant land,  
 Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey  
 A melancholy into all our day.

Only—but this is rare—  
 When a belovéd hand is laid in ours,

When, jaded with the rush and glare  
Of the interminable hours,  
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,  
When our world-deafen'd ear  
Is by the tones of a loved voice caress'd—  
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,  
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.  
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,  
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.  
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,  
And hears its winding murmur ; and he sees  
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

And there arrives a lull in the hot race  
Wherein he doth for ever chase  
That flying and elusive shadow, rest.  
An air of coolness plays upon his face,  
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.—  
And then he thinks he knows  
The hills where his life rose,  
And the sea where it goes.

## LINES

WRITTEN IN KENSINGTON GARDENS

IN this lone, open glade I lie,  
Screen'd by deep boughs on either hand ;  
And at its end, to stay the eye,  
Those black-crown'd, red-boled pine-trees stand !

Birds here make song, each bird has his,  
Across the girdling city's hum.

How green under the boughs it is !  
How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come !

Sometimes a child will cross the glade  
To take his nurse his broken toy ;  
Sometimes a thrush flit overhead  
Deep in her unknown day's employ.

Here at my feet what wonders pass,  
What endless, active life is here !  
What blowing daisies, fragrant grass !  
An air-stirr'd forest, fresh and clear

Scarce fresher is the mountain-sod  
Where the tired angler lies, stretch'd out,  
And, eased of basket and of rod,  
Counts his day's spoil, the spotted trout.

In the huge world, which roars hard by,  
Be others happy if they can !  
But in my helpless cradle I  
Was breathed on by the rural Pan.

I, on men's impious uproar hurl'd,  
Think often, as I hear them rave,  
That peace has left the upper world  
And now keeps only in the grave.

Yet here is peace for ever new !  
When I who watch them am away,  
Still all things in this glade go through  
The changes of their quiet day.

Then to their happy rest they pass !  
The flowers upclose, the birds are fed,  
The night comes down upon the grass,  
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.



Calm soul of all things ! make it mine  
To feel, amid the city's jar,  
That there abides a peace of thine,  
Man did not make, and cannot mar.

The will to neither strive nor cry,  
The power to feel with others give !  
Calm, calm me more ! nor let me die  
Before I have begun to live.

## A WISH

I ASK not that my bed of death  
From bands of greedy heirs be free ;  
For these besiege the latest breath  
Of fortune's favour'd sons, not me.

I ask not each kind soul to keep  
Tearless, when of my death he hears.  
Let those who will, if any, weep !  
There are worse plagues on earth than tears.

I ask but that my death may find  
The freedom to my life denied ;  
Ask but the folly of mankind  
Then, then at last, to quit my side.

Spare me the whispering, crowded room,  
The friends who come, and gape, and go ;  
The ceremonious air of gloom—  
All, which makes death a hideous show !

Nor bring, to see me cease to live,  
Some doctor full of phrase and fame,  
'To shake his sapient head, and give  
The ill he cannot cure a name.

Nor fetch, to take the accustom'd toll  
Of the poor sinner bound for death,  
His brother-doctor of the soul,  
'To canvass with official breath

The future and its viewless things—  
That undiscover'd mystery  
Which one who feels death's winnowing wings  
Must needs read clearer, sure, than he !

Bring none of these ; but let me be,  
While all around in silence lies,  
Moved to the window near, and see  
Once more, before my dying eyes,

Bathed in the sacred dew of morn  
The wide aerial landscape spread—  
The world which was ere I was born,  
The world which lasts when I am dead ;

Which never was the friend of *one*,  
Nor promised love it could not give,  
But lit for all its generous sun,  
And lived itself, and made us live.

There let me gaze, till I become  
In soul, with what I gaze on, wed !  
To feel the universe my home ;  
To have before my mind—instead

Of the sick room, the mortal strife,  
The turmoil for a little breath—  
The pure eternal course of life,  
Not human combatings with death !

Thus feeling, gazing, might I grow  
Composed, refresh'd, ennobled, clear ;  
Then willing let my spirit go  
To work or wait elsewhere or here !

## THE FUTURE

A WANDERER is man from his birth.  
He was born in a ship  
On the breast of the river of Time ;  
Brimming with wonder and joy  
He spreads out his arms to the light,  
Rivets his gaze on the banks of the stream.

As what he sees is, so have his thoughts been.  
Whether he wakes,  
Where the snowy mountainous pass,  
Echoing the screams of the eagles,  
Hems in its gorges the bed  
Of the new-born clear-flowing stream ;  
Whether he first sees light  
Where the river in gleaming rings  
Sluggishly winds through the plain ;  
Whether in sound of the swallowing sea—  
As is the world on the banks,  
So is the mind of the man.

Vainly does each, as he glides,  
Fable and dream  
Of the lands which the river of Time  
Had left ere he woke on its breast,  
Or shall reach when his eyes have been closed.

Only the tract where he sails  
 He wots of; only the thoughts,  
 Raised by the objects he passes, are his.

Who can see the green earth any more  
 As she was by the sources of Time?  
 Who imagines her fields as they lay  
 In the sunshine, unworn by the plough?  
 Who thinks as they thought,  
 The tribes who then roam'd on her breast,  
 Her vigorous, primitive sons?

What girl  
 Now reads in her bosom as clear  
 As Rebekah read, when she sate  
 At eve by the palm-shaded well?  
 Who guards in her breast  
 As deep, as pellucid a spring  
 Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure?

What bard,  
 At the height of his vision, can deem  
 Of God, of the world, of the soul,  
 With a plainness as near,  
 As flashing as Moses felt  
 When he lay in the night by his flock  
 On the starlit Arabian waste?  
 Can rise and obey  
 The beck of the Spirit like him?

This tract which the river of Time  
 Now flows through with us, is the plain.  
 Gone is the calm of its earlier shore.  
 Border'd by cities and hoarse

With a thousand cries is its stream.  
And we on its breast, our minds  
Are confused as the cries which we hear,  
Changing and shot as the sights which we see.

And we say that repose has fled  
For ever the course of the river of Time.  
That cities will crowd to its edge  
In a blacker, incessanter line ;  
That the din will be more on its banks,  
Denser the trade on its stream,  
Flatter the plain where it flows,  
Fiercer the sun overhead.  
That never will those on its breast  
See an ennobling sight,  
Drink of the feeling of quiet again.

But what was before us we know not,  
And we know not what shall succeed.

Haply, the river of Time—  
As it grows, as the towns on its marge  
Fling their wavering lights  
On a wider, statelier stream—  
May acquire, if not the calm  
Of its early mountainous shore,  
Yet a solemn peace of its own.

And the width of the waters, the hush  
Of the grey expanse where he floats,  
Freshening its current and spotted with foam  
As it draws to the Ocean, may strike  
Peace to the soul of the man on its breast—  
As the pale waste widens around him,

As the banks fade dimmer away,  
As the stars come out, and the night-wind  
Brings up the stream  
Murmurs and scents of the infinite sea.

ELEGIAC POEMS





## THE SCHOLAR-GIPSY <sup>16</sup>

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill ;  
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes !  
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,  
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,  
Nor the cropp'd herbage shoot another head.  
But when the fields are still,  
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,  
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen  
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd green,  
Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest !

Here, where the reaper was at work of late—  
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves  
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,  
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,  
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use—  
Here will I sit and wait,  
While to my ear from uplands far away  
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,  
With distant cries of reapers in the corn—  
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,  
And here till sun-down, shepherd ! will I be.  
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,

And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see  
 Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep ;  
 And air-swept lindens yield  
 Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers  
 Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,  
 And bower me from the August sun with shade ;  
 And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—  
 Come, let me read the oft-read tale again !  
 The story of the Oxford scholar poor,  
 Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,  
 Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,  
 One summer-morn forsook  
 His friends, and went to learn the gipsy-lore,  
 And roam'd the world with that wild brotherhood,  
 And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,  
 But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country-lanes,  
 Two scholars, whom at college erst he knew,  
 Met him, and of his way of life enquired ;  
 Whereat he answer'd, that the gipsy-crew,  
 His mates, had arts to rule as they desired  
 The workings of men's brains,  
 And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.  
 "And I," he said, "the secret of their art,  
 When fully learn'd, will to the world impart ;  
 But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill."

This said, he left them, and return'd no more.—  
 But rumours hung about the country-side,  
 That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,  
 Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,

In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,  
The same the gipsies wore.

Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring ;  
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,  
On the warm ingle-bench, the smock-frock'd boors  
Had found him seated at their entering,

But, 'mid their drink and clatter, he would fly.  
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,  
And put the shepherds, wanderer ! on thy trace ;  
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks  
I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet place ;  
Or in my boat I lie  
Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer-heats,  
'Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,  
And watch the warm, green-muffled Cumner hills,  
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground !  
Thee at the ferry Oxford riders blithe,  
Returning home on summer-nights, have met  
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,  
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,  
As the punt's rope chops round ;  
And leaning backward in a pensive dream,  
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers  
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,  
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen no more !—  
Maidens, who from the distant hamlets come  
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,  
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,  
Or cross a stile into the public way.

Oft thou hast given them store  
 Of flowers—the frail-leaf'd, white anemony,  
 Dark bluebells drench'd with dews of summer eyes,  
 And purple orchises with spotted leaves—  
 But none hath words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here  
 In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,  
 Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass  
 Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering Thames,  
 To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,  
 Have often pass'd thee near  
 Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown ;  
 Mark'd thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,  
 Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air—  
 But, when they came from bathing, thou wast gone !

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,  
 Where at her open door the housewife darns,  
 Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate  
 To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.  
 Children, who early range these slopes and late  
 For cresses from the rills,  
 Have known thee eying, all an April-day,  
 The springing pastures and the feeding kine ;  
 And mark'd thee, when the stars come out and shine,  
 Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley Wood—  
 Where most the gipsies by the turf-edged way  
 Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see  
 With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of grey,  
 Above the forest-ground called Thessaly—  
 The blackbird, picking food,

Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all ;  
 So often has he known thee past him stray,  
 Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd spray,  
 And waiting for the spark from heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill  
 Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,  
 Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge,  
 Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,  
 Thy face tow'rd Hinksey and its wintry ridge?  
 And thou hast climb'd the hill,  
 And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner range ;  
 Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,  
 The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—  
 Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd grange.

But what—I dream ! Two hundred years are flown  
 Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,  
 And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe  
 That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls  
 To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy-tribe ;  
 And thou from earth art gone  
 Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid—  
 Some country-nook, where o'er thy unknown grave  
 Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,  
 Under a dark, red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours !  
 For what wears out the life of mortal men ?  
 'Tis that from change to change their being rolls ;  
 'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,  
 Exhaust the energy of strongest souls  
 And numb the elastic powers.

Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,  
 And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,  
 To the just-pausing Genius we remit  
 Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so?  
 Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire ;  
 Else wert thou long since number'd with the dead !  
 Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire !  
 The generations of thy peers are fled,  
 And we ourselves shall go ;  
 But thou possessest an immortal lot,  
 And we imagine thee exempt from age  
 And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,  
 Because thou hadst—what we, alas ! have not.

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers  
 Fresh, undiverted to the world without,  
 Firm to their mark, not spent on other things ;  
 Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,  
 Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.  
 O life unlike to ours !  
 Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,  
 Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,  
 And each half lives a hundred different lives ;  
 Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from heaven ! and we,  
 Light half-believers of our casual creeds,  
 Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd,  
 Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,  
 Whose vague resolves never have been fulfill'd ;  
 For whom each year we see

Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new ;  
 Who hesitate and falter life away,  
 And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day—  
 Ah ! do not we, wanderer ! await it too ?

Yes, we await it !—but it still delays,  
 And then we suffer ! and amongst us one,  
 Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly  
 His seat upon the intellectual throne ;  
 And all his store of sad experience he  
 Lays bare of wretched days ;  
 Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,  
 And how the dying spark of hope was fed,  
 And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,  
 And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest ! and we others pine,  
 And wish the long unhappy dream would end,  
 And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear ;  
 With close-lipp'd patience for our only friend,  
 Sad patience, too near neighbour to despair—  
 But none has hope like thine !  
 Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,  
 Roaming the country-side, a truant boy,  
 Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,  
 And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,  
 And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames ;  
 Before this strange disease of modern life,  
 With its sick hurry, its divided aims,  
 Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife—  
 Fly hence, our contact fear !

Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood !  
 Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern  
 From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,  
 Wave us away, and keep thy solitude !

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,  
 Still clutching the inviolable shade,  
 With a free, onward impulse brushing through,  
 By night, the silver'd branches of the glade—  
 Far on the forest-skirts, where none pursue,  
 On some mild pastoral slope  
 Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales  
 Freshen thy flowers as in former years  
 With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,  
 From the dark dingles, to the nightingales !

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly !  
 For strong the infection of our mental strife,  
 Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest ;  
 And we should win thee from thy own fair life,  
 Like us distracted, and like us unblest.  
 Soon, soon thy cheer would die,  
 Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,  
 And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made ;  
 And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,  
 Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles !  
 —As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,  
 Descried at sunrise an emerging prow  
 Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,  
 The fringes of a southward-facing brow  
 Among the Ægæan isles ;



And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,  
 Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,  
 Green, bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd in brine—  
 And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted masters of the waves—  
 And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail ;  
 And day and night held on indignantly  
 O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,  
 Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,  
 To where the Atlantic raves  
 Outside the western straits ; and unbent sails  
 There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,  
 Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come ;  
 And on the beach undid his corded bales.

### THYRSIS <sup>17</sup>

A MONODY, *to commemorate the author's friend,*

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH, *who died at Florence, 1861.*

How changed is here each spot man makes or fills !  
 In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the same ;  
 The village street its haunted mansion lacks,  
 And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,  
 And from the roofs the twisted chimney-stacks—  
 Are ye too changed, ye hills ?  
 See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men  
 To-night from Oxford up your pathway strays !  
 Here came I often, often, in old days—  
 Thyrsis and I ; we still had Thyrsis then.

Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth Farm,  
 Past the high wood, to where the elm-tree crowns  
 The hill behind whose ridge the sunset flames?  
 The signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs,  
 The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful Thames?—  
 This winter-eve is warm,  
 Humid the air! leafless, yet soft as spring,  
 The tender purple spray on copse and briers!  
 And that sweet city with her dreaming spires,  
 She needs not June for beauty's heightening,

Lovely all times she lies, lovely to-night!—  
 Only, methinks, some loss of habit's power  
 Befalls me wandering through this upland dim.  
 Once pass'd I blindfold here, at any hour;  
 Now seldom come I, since I came with him.  
 That single elm-tree bright  
 Against the west—I miss it! is it gone?  
 We prized it dearly; while it stood, we said,  
 Our friend, the Gipsy-Scholar, was not dead;  
 While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here,  
 But once I knew each field, each flower, each stick;  
 And with the country-folk acquaintance made  
 By barn in threshing-time, by new-built rick.  
 Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assay'd.  
 Ah me! this many a year  
 My pipe is lost, my shepherd's holiday!  
 Needs must I lose them, needs with heavy heart  
 Into the world and wave of men depart;  
 But Thyrsis of his own will went away.

It irk'd him to be here, he could not rest.  
 He loved each simple joy the country yields,

He loved his mates ; but yet he could not keep,  
 For that a shadow lour'd on the fields,  
 Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep.  
 Some life of men unblest  
 He knew, which made him droop, and fill'd his head.  
 He went ; his piping took a troubled sound  
 Of storms that rage outside our happy ground ;  
 He could not wait their passing, he is dead.

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,  
 When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,  
 Before the roses and the longest day—  
 When garden-walks and all the grassy floor  
 With blossoms red and white of fallen May  
 And chestnut-flowers are strewn—  
 So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,  
 From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees,  
 Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze :  
*The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I !*

Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go ?  
 Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,  
 Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,  
 Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,  
 Sweet-William with his homely cottage-smell,  
 And stocks in fragrant blow ;  
 Roses that down the alleys shine afar,  
 And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,  
 And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,  
 And the full moon, and the white evening-star.

He hearkens not ! light comer, he is flown !  
 What matters it ? next year he will return,  
 And we shall have him in the sweet spring-days,

With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling fern,  
 And blue-bells trembling by the forest-ways,  
 And scent of hay new-mown.  
 But Thyrsis never more we swains shall see ;  
 See him come back, and cut a smoother reed,  
 And blow a strain the world at last shall heed—  
 For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd thee !

Alack, for Corydon no rival now !—  
 But when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate,  
 Some good survivor with his flute would go,  
 Piping a ditty sad for Bion's fate ;  
 And cross the unpermitted ferry's flow,  
 And relax Pluto's brow,  
 And make leap up with joy the beauteous head  
 Of Proserpine, among whose crowned hair  
 Are flowers first open'd on Sicilian air,  
 And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the dead.

✓ O easy access to the hearer's grace  
 When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine !  
 For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,  
 She knew the Dorian water's gush divine,  
 She knew each lily white which Enna yields,  
 Each rose with blushing face ;  
 She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain.  
 But ah, of our poor Thames she never heard !  
 Her foot the Cunner cowslips never stir'd ;  
 And we should tease her with our plaint in vain !

Well ! wind-dispersed and vain the words will be,  
 Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its hour  
 In the old haunt, and find our tree-topp'd hill !  
 Who, if not I, for questing here hath power ?

I know the wood which hides the daffodil,  
 I know the Fyfield tree,  
 I know what white, what purple fritillaries  
 The grassy harvest of the river-fields,  
 Above by Ensham, down by Sandford, yields,  
 And what sedged brooks are Thames's tributaries ;

I know these slopes ; who knows them if not I ? —  
 But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,  
 With thorns once studded, old, white-blossom'd trees,  
 Where thick the cowslips grew, and far descried  
 High tower'd the spikes of purple orchises,  
 Hath since our day put by  
 The coronals of that forgotten time ;  
 Down each green bank hath gone the ploughboy's team,  
 And only in the hidden brookside gleam  
 Primroses, orphans of the flowery prime.

Where is the girl, who by the boatman's door,  
 Above the locks, above the boating throng,  
 Unmoor'd our skiff when through the Wytham flats,  
 Red loosestrife and blond meadow-sweet among  
 And darting swallows and light water-gnats,  
 We track'd the shy Thames shore ?  
 Where are the mowers, who, as the tiny swell  
 Of our boat passing heaved the river-grass,  
 Stood with suspended scythe to see us pass ?—  
 They all are gone, and thou art gone as well !

Yes, thou art gone ! and round me too the night  
 In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.  
 I see her veil draw soft across the day,  
 I feel her slowly chilling breath invade  
 The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with grey ;

I feel her finger light  
 Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train ;—  
 The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew,  
 The heart less bounding at emotion new,  
 And hope, once crush'd, less quick to spring again.

And long the way appears, which seem'd so short  
 To the less practised eye of sanguine youth ;  
 And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,  
 The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth,  
 Tops in life's morning-sun so bright and bare !  
 Unbreachable the fort  
 Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its wall ;  
 And strange and vain the earthly turmoil grows,  
 And near and real the charm of thy repose,  
 And night as welcome as a friend would fall.

But hush ! the upland hath a sudden loss  
 Of quiet !—Look, adown the dusk hill-side,  
 A troop of Oxford hunters going home,  
 As in old days, jovial and talking, ride !  
 From hunting with the Berkshire hounds they come.  
 Quick ! let me fly, and cross  
 Into yon farther field !—'Tis done ; and see,  
 Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify  
 The orange and pale violet evening-sky,  
 Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree ! the Tree !

I take the omen ! Eve lets down her veil,  
 The white fog creeps from bush to bush about,  
 The west unflushes, the high stars grow bright,  
 And in the scatter'd farms the lights come out.  
 I cannot reach the signal-tree to-night,  
 Yet, happy omen, hail !

Hear it from thy broad lucent Arno-vale  
 (For there thine earth-forgetting eyelids keep  
 The morningless and unawakening sleep  
 Under the flowery oleanders pale),

Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our tree is there !—  
 Ah, vain ! These English fields, this upland dim,  
 These brambles pale with mist engarlanded,  
 That lone, sky-pointing tree, are not for him ;  
 To a boon southern country he is fled,  
 And now in happier air,  
 Wandering with the great Mother's train divine  
 (And purer or more subtle soul than thee,  
 I trow, the mighty Mother doth not see)  
 Within a folding of the Apennine,

Thou hearest the immortal chants of old !—  
 Putting his sickle to the perilous grain  
 In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian king,  
 For thee the Lityerses-song again  
 Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth sing ;<sup>18</sup>  
 Sings his Sicilian fold,  
 His sheep, his hapless love, his blinded eyes—  
 And how a call celestial round him rang,  
 And heavenward from the fountain-brink he sprang,  
 And all the marvel of the golden skies.

There thou art gone, and me thou leavest here  
 Sole in these fields ! yet will I not despair.  
 Despair I will not, while I yet descry  
 'Neath the mild canopy of English air  
 That lonely tree against the western sky.  
 Still, still these slopes, 'tis clear,  
 Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee !

Fields where soft sheep from cages pull the hay,  
 Woods with anemonies in flower till May,  
 Know him a wanderer still ; then why not me ?

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,  
 Shy to illumine ; and I seek it too.

This does not come with houses or with gold,  
 With place, with honour, and a flattering crew ;  
 'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold—  
 But the smooth-slipping weeks  
 Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired ;  
 Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,  
 He wends unfollow'd, he must house alone ;  
 Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired.

Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wast bound ;  
 Thou wanderest with me for a little hour !  
 Men gave thee nothing ; but this happy quest,  
 If men esteem'd thee feeble, gave thee power,  
 If men procured thee trouble, gave thee rest.  
 And this rude Cumner ground,  
 Its fir-topped Hurst, its farms, its quiet fields,  
 Here cam'st thou in thy jocund youthful time,  
 Here was thine height of strength, thy golden prime !  
 And still the haunt beloved a virtue yields.

What though the music of thy rustic flute  
 Kept not for long its happy, country tone ;  
 Lost it too soon, and learnt a stormy note  
 Of men contention-tost, of men who groan,  
 Which task'd thy pipe too sore, and tired thy throat—  
 It fail'd, and thou wast mute !  
 Yet hadst thou alway visions of our light,  
 And long with men of care thou couldst not stay,



And soon thy foot resumed its wandering way,  
Left human haunt, and on alone till night.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here !  
'Mid city-noise, not, as with thee of yore,  
Thyrsis ! in reach of sheep-bells is my home.  
—Then through the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar,  
Let in thy voice a whisper often come,  
To chase fatigue and fear :  
*Why faintest thou ? I wander'd till I died.*  
*Roam on ! The light we sought is shining still.*  
*Dost thou ask proof ? Our tree yet crowns the hill,*  
*Our Scholar travels yet the loved hill-side.*

## MEMORIAL VERSES

APRIL, 1850

GOETHE in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,  
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.  
But one such death remain'd to come ;  
The last poetic voice is dumb—  
We stand to-day by Wordsworth's tomb.

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,  
We bow'd our head and held our breath.  
He taught us little ; but our soul  
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.  
With shivering heart the strife we saw  
Of passion with eternal law ;  
And yet with reverential awe  
We watch'd the fount of fiery life  
Which served for that Titanic strife.

When Goethe's death was told, we said :  
 Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.  
 Physician of the iron age,  
 Goethe has done his pilgrimage.  
 He took the suffering human race,  
 He read each wound, each weakness clear ;  
 And struck his finger on the place,  
 And said : *Thou ailest here, and here !*  
 He look'd on Europe's dying hour  
 Of fitful dream and feverish power ;  
 His eye plung'd down the weltering strife,  
 The turmoil of expiring life—  
 He said : *The end is everywhere,*  
*Art still has truth, take refuge there !*  
 And he was happy, if to know  
 Causes of things, and far below  
 His feet to see the lurid flow  
 Of terror, and insane distress,  
 And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth !—Ah, pale ghosts, rejoice !  
 For never has such soothing voice  
 Been to your shadowy world convey'd,  
 Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade  
 Heard the clear song of Orpheus come  
 Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.  
 Wordsworth has gone from us—and ye,  
 Ah, may ye feel his voice as we !  
 He too upon a wintry clime  
 Had fallen—on this iron time  
 Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.  
 He found us when the age had bound  
 Our souls in its benumbing round ;

He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.  
He laid us as we lay at birth  
On the cool flowery lap of earth,  
Smiles broke from us and we had ease ;  
The hills were round us, and the breeze  
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again ;  
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.  
Our youth return'd ; for there was shed  
On spirits that had long been dead,  
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,  
The freshness of the early world.

Ah ! since dark days still bring to light  
Man's prudence and man's fiery might,  
Time may restore us in his course  
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force ;  
But where will Europe's latter hour  
Again find Wordsworth's healing power ?  
Others will teach us how to dare,  
And against fear our breast to steel ;  
Others will strengthen us to bear—  
But who, ah ! who, will make us feel ?  
The cloud of mortal destiny,  
Others will front it fearlessly—  
But who, like him, will put it by ?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave  
O Rotha, with thy living wave !  
Sing him thy best ! for few or none  
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

## STANZAS

IN MEMORY OF EDWARD QUILLINAN

I SAW him sensitive in frame,  
 I knew his spirits low ;  
 And wish'd him health, success, and fame—  
 I do not wish it now.

For these are all their own reward,  
 And leave no good behind ;  
 They try us, oftenest make us hard,  
 Less modest, pure, and kind.

Alas ! yet to the suffering man,  
 In this his mortal state,  
 Friends could not give what fortune can—  
 Health, ease, a heart elate.

But he is now by fortune foil'd  
 No more ; and we retain  
 The memory of a man unspoil'd,  
 Sweet, generous, and humane—

With all the fortunate have not,  
 With gentle voice and brow.  
 —Alive, we would have changed his lot,  
 We would not change it now.

## STANZAS FROM CARNAC

FAR on its rocky knoll descried  
 Saint Michael's chapel cuts the sky.  
 I climb'd ;—beneath me, bright and wide,  
 Lay the lone coast of Brittany.

Bright in the sunset, weird and still,  
It lay beside the Atlantic wave,  
As though the wizard Merlin's will  
Yet charm'd it from his forest-grave.

Behind me on their grassy sweep,  
Bearded with lichen, scrawl'd and grey,  
The giant stones of Carnac sleep,  
In the mild evening of the May.

No priestly stern procession now  
Moves through their rows of pillars old ;  
No victims bleed, no Druids bow—  
Sheep make the daisied aisles their fold.

From bush to bush the cuckoo flies,  
The orchis red gleams everywhere ;  
Gold furze with broom in blossom vies,  
The blue-bells perfume all the air.

And o'er the glistening, lonely land,  
Rise up, all round, the Christian spires ;  
The church of Carnac, by the strand,  
Catches the westering sun's last fires.

And there, across the watery way,  
See, low above the tide at flood,  
The sickle-sweep of Quiberon Bay,  
Whose beach once ran with loyal blood !

And beyond that, the Atlantic wide !—  
All round, no soul, no boat, no hail ;  
But, on the horizon's verge descried,  
Hangs, touch'd with light, one snowy sail !

Ah ! where is he, who should have come <sup>19</sup>  
 Where that far sail is passing now,  
 Past the Loire's mouth, and by the foam  
 Of Finistère's unquiet brow,

Home, round into the English wave ?  
 —He tarries where the Rock of Spain  
 Mediterranean waters lave ;  
 He enters not the Atlantic main.

Oh, could he once have reach'd this air  
 Freshen'd by plunging tides, by showers !  
 Have felt this breath he loved, of fair  
 Cool northern fields, and grass, and flowers !

He long'd for it—press'd on.—In vain !  
 At the Straits fail'd that spirit brave.  
 The south was parent of his pain,  
 The south is mistress of his grave.

### A SOUTHERN NIGHT

THE sandy spits, the shore-lock'd lakes,  
 Melt into open, moonlit sea ;  
 The soft Mediterranean breaks  
 At my feet, free.

Dotting the fields of corn and vine,  
 Like ghosts the huge, gnarl'd olives stand.  
 Behind, that lovely mountain-line !  
 While, by the strand,

Cette, with its glistening houses white,  
 Curves with the curving beach away

To where the lighthouse beacons bright  
Far in the bay.

Ah ! such a night, so soft, so lone,  
So moonlit, saw me once of yore<sup>20</sup>  
Wander unquiet, and my own  
Vext heart deplore.

But now that trouble is forgot ;  
Thy memory, thy pain, to-night,  
My brother ! and thine early lot,<sup>21</sup>  
Possess me quite.

The murmur of this Midland deep  
Is heard to-night around thy grave,  
There, where Gibraltar's cannon'd steep  
O'erfrowns the wave.

For there, with bodily anguish keen,  
With Indian heats at last fordone,  
With public toil and private teen—  
Thou sank'st, alone.

Slow to a stop, at morning grey,  
I see the smoke-crown'd vessel come ;  
Slow round her paddles dies away  
The seething foam.

A boat is lower'd from her side ;  
Ah, gently place him on the bench !  
That spirit—if all have not yet died—  
A breath might quench.

Is this the eye, the footstep fast,  
The mien of youth we used to see,  
Poor, gallant boy !—for such thou wast,  
Still art, to me.

The limbs their wonted tasks refuse ;  
 The eyes are glazed, thou canst not speak ;  
 And whiter than thy white burnous  
 That wasted check !

Enough ! The boat, with quiet shock,  
 Unto its haven coming nigh,  
 Touches, and on Gibraltar's rock  
 Lands thee to die.

Ah me ! Gibraltar's strand is far,  
 But farther yet across the brine  
 Thy dear wife's ashes buried are,  
 Remote from thine.

For there, where morning's sacred fount  
 Its golden rain on earth confers,  
 The snowy Himalayan Mount  
 O'ershadows hers.

Strange irony of fate, alas,  
 Which, for two jaded English, saves,  
 When from their dusty life they pass,  
 Such peaceful graves !

In cities should we English lie,  
 Where cries are rising ever new,  
 And men's incessant stream goes by—  
 We who pursue

Our business with unslackening stride,  
 Traverse in troops, with care-fill'd breast,  
 The soft Mediterranean side,  
 The Nile, the East,



And see all sights from pole to pole,  
And glance, and nod, and bustle by,  
And never once possess our soul  
Before we die.

Not by those hoary Indian hills,  
Not by this gracious Midland sea  
Whose floor to-night sweet moonshine fills,  
Should our graves be.

Some sage, to whom the world was dead,  
And men were specks, and life a play ;  
Who made the roots of trees his bed,  
And once a day

With staff and gourd his way did bend  
To villages and homes of man,  
For food to keep him till he end  
His mortal span

And the pure goal of being reach ;  
Hoar-headed, wrinkled, clad in white,  
Without companion, without speech,  
By day and night

Pondering God's mysteries untold,  
And tranquil as the glacier-snows  
He by those Indian mountains old  
Might well repose.

Some grey crusading knight austere,  
Who bore Saint Louis company,  
And came home hurt to death, and here  
Landed to die ;

Some youthful troubadour, whose tongue  
 Fill'd Europe once with his love-pain,  
 Who here outworn had sunk, and sung  
 His dying strain ;

Some girl, who here from castle-bower,  
 With furtive step and cheek of flame,  
 'Twixt myrtle-hedges all in flower  
 By moonlight came

To meet her pirate-lover's ship ;  
 And from the wave-kiss'd marble stair  
 Beckon'd him on, with quivering lip  
 And floating hair ;

And lived some moons in happy trance,  
 Then learnt his death and pined away—  
 Such by these waters of romance  
 'Twas meet to lay.

But you—a grave for knight or sage,  
 Romantic, solitary, still,  
 O spent ones of a work-day age !  
 Befits you ill.

So sang I ; but the midnight breeze,  
 Down to the brimm'd, moon-charmed main,  
 Comes softly through the olive-trees,  
 And checks my strain.

I think of her, whose gentle tongue  
 All plaint in her own cause controll'd ;  
 Of thee I think, my brother ! young  
 In heart, high-soul'd—

That comely face, that cluster'd brow,  
 That cordial hand, that bearing free,  
 I see them still, I see them now,  
 Shall always see !

And what but gentleness untired,  
 And what but noble feeling warm,  
 Wherever shown, howe'er inspired,  
 Is grace, is charm ?

What else is all these waters are,  
 What else is steep'd in lucid sheen,  
 What else is bright, what else is fair,  
 What else serene ?

Mild o'er her grave, ye mountains, shine !  
 Gently by his, ye waters, glide !  
 To that in you which is divine  
 They were allied.

## HAWORTH CHURCHYARD

APRIL, 1855

WHERE, under Loughrigg, the stream  
 Of Rotha sparkles through fields  
 Vested for ever with green,  
 Four years since, in the house  
 Of a gentle spirit, now dead—  
 Wordsworth's son-in-law, friend—  
 I saw the meeting of two  
 Gifted women.<sup>22</sup> The one,  
 Brilliant with recent renown,

Young, unpractised, had told  
 With a master's accent her feign'd  
 Story of passionate life ;  
 The other, maturer in fame,  
 Earning, she too, her praise  
 First in fiction, had since  
 Widen'd her sweep, and survey'd  
 History, politics, mind.

The two held converse ; they wrote  
 In a book which of world-famous souls  
 Kept the memorial ;—bard,  
 Warrior, statesman, had sign'd  
 Their names ; chief glory of all,  
 Scott had bestow'd there his last  
 Breathings of song, with a pen  
 Tottering, a death-stricken hand.

Hope at that meeting smiled fair.  
 Years in number, it seem'd,  
 Lay before both, and a fame  
 Heighten'd, and multiplied power.—  
 Behold ! The elder, to-day,  
 Lies expecting from death,  
 In mortal weakness, a last  
 Summons ! the younger is dead !

First to the living we pay  
 Mournful homage ;—the Muse  
 Gains not an earth-deafen'd ear.

Hail to the steadfast soul,  
 Which, unflinching and keen,  
 Wrought to erase from its depth  
 Mist and illusion and fear !

Hail to the spirit which dared  
Trust its own thoughts, before yet  
Echoed her back by the crowd !  
Hail to the courage which gave  
Voice to its creed, ere the creed  
Won consecration from time !

Turn we next to the dead.  
—How shall we honour the young,  
The ardent, the gifted ? how mourn ?  
Console we cannot, her ear  
Is deaf. Far northward from here,  
In a churchyard high 'mid the moors  
Of Yorkshire, a little earth  
Stops it for ever to praise.

Where, behind Keighley, the road  
Up to the heart of the moors  
Between heath-clad showery hills  
Runs, and colliers' carts  
Poach the deep ways coming down,  
And a rough, grimed race have their homes—  
There on its slope is built  
The moorland town. But the church  
Stands on the crest of the hill,  
Lonely and bleak ;—at its side  
The parsonage-house and the graves.

Strew with laurel the grave  
Of the early-dying ! Alas,  
Early she goes on the path  
To the silent country, and leaves  
Half her laurels unwon,  
Dying too soon !—yet green

Laurels she had, and a course  
Short, but redoubled by fame.

And not friendless, and not  
Only with strangers to meet,  
Faces ungreeting and cold,  
'Thou, O mourn'd one, to-day  
Enterest the house of the grave !  
'Those of thy blood, whom thou lov'dst,  
Have preceded thee—young,  
Loving, a sisterly band ;  
Some in art, some in gift  
Inferior—all in fame.  
They, like friends, shall receive  
'This comer, greet her with joy ;  
Welcome the sister, the friend ;  
Hear with delight of thy fame !

Round thee they lie—the grass  
Blows from their graves to thy own !  
She, whose genius, though not  
Puissant like thine, was yet  
Sweet and graceful ;—and she  
(How shall I sing her?) whose soul  
Knew no fellow for might,  
Passion, vehemence, grief,  
Daring, since Byron died,  
'That world-famed son of fire—she, who sank  
Baffled, unknown, self-consumed ;  
Whose too bold dying song<sup>23</sup>  
Stirr'd, like a clarion-blast, my soul.

Of one, too, I have heard,  
A brother—sleeps he here ?

Of all that gifted race  
 Not the least gifted ; young,  
 Unhappy, eloquent—the child  
 Of many hopes, of many tears.  
 O boy, if here thou sleep'st, sleep well !  
 On thee too did the Muse  
 Bright in thy cradle smile ;  
 But some dark shadow came  
 (I know not what) and interposed.

Sleep, O cluster of friends,  
 Sleep !—or only when May,  
 Brought by the west-wind, returns  
 Back to your native heaths,  
 And the plover is heard on the moors,  
 Yearly awake to behold  
 The opening summer, the sky,  
 The shining moorland—to hear  
 The drowsy bee, as of old,  
 Hum o'er the thyme, the grouse  
 Call from the heather in bloom !  
 Sleep, or only for this  
 Break your united repose !

## EPILOGUE

So I sang ; but the Muse,  
 Shaking her head, took the harp—  
 Stern interrupted my strain,  
 Angrily smote on the chords.

April showers  
 Rush o'er the Yorkshire moors.

Stormy, through driving mist,  
Loom the blurr'd hills ; the rain  
Lashes the newly-made grave.

Unquiet souls !  
—In the dark fermentation of earth,  
In the never idle workshop of nature,  
In the eternal movement,  
Ye shall find yourselves again !

### RUGBY CHAPEL

NOVEMBER 1857

COLDLY, sadly descends  
The autumn-evening. The field  
Strewn with its dank yellow drifts  
Of wither'd leaves, and the elms,  
Fade into dimness apace,  
Silent ;—hardly a shout  
From a few boys late at their play !  
The lights come out in the street,  
In the school-room windows ;—but cold,  
Solemn, unlighted, austere,  
Through the gathering darkness, arise  
The chapel-walls, in whose bound  
Thou, my father ! art laid.

There thou dost lie, in the gloom  
Of the autumn evening. But ah !  
That word, *gloom*, to my mind  
Brings thee back, in the light  
Of thy radiant vigour, again ;  
In the gloom of November we pass'd



Days not dark at thy side ;  
Seasons impair'd not the ray  
Of thy buoyant cheerfulness clear.  
Such thou wast ! and I stand  
In the autumn evening, and think  
Of bygone autumns with thee.

Fifteen years have gone round  
Since thou arosest to tread,  
In the summer-morning, the road  
Of death, at a call unforeseen,  
Sudden. For fifteen years,  
We who till then in thy shade  
Rested as under the boughs  
Of a mighty oak, have endured  
Sunshine and rain as we might,  
Bare, unshaded, alone,  
Lacking the shelter of thee.

O strong soul, by what shore  
Tariest thou now ? For that force,  
Surely, has not been left vain !  
Somewhere, surely, afar,  
In the sounding labour-house vast  
Of being, is practised that strength,  
Zealous, beneficent, firm !

Yes, in some far-shining sphere,  
Conscious or not of the past,  
Still thou performest the word  
Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live—  
Prompt, unwearied, as here !  
Still thou upraisest with zeal  
The humble good from the ground,

Sternly represseth the bad !  
 Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse  
 Those who with half-open eyes  
 Tread the border-land dim  
 'Twixt vice and virtue ; reviv'st,  
 Succourest !—this was thy work,  
 This was thy life upon earth.

What is the course of the life  
 Of mortal men on the earth ?—  
 Most men eddy about  
 Here and there—eat and drink,  
 Chatter and love and hate,  
 Gather and squander, are raised  
 Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,  
 Striving blindly, achieving  
 Nothing ; and then they die—  
 Perish ;—and no one asks  
 Who or what they have been,  
 More than he asks what waves,  
 In the moonlit solitudes mild  
 Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,  
 Foam'd for a moment, and gone.

And there are some, whom a thirst  
 Ardent, unquenchable, fires,  
 Not with the crowd to be spent,  
 Not without aim to go round  
 In an eddy of purposeless dust,  
 Effort unmeaning and vain.  
 Ah yes ! some of us strive  
 Not without action to die  
 Fruitless, but something to snatch  
 From dull oblivion, nor all

Glut the devouring grave !  
We, we have chosen our path—  
Path to a clear-purposed goal,  
Path of advance !—but it leads  
A long, steep journey, through sunk  
Gorges, o'er mountains in snow.  
Cheerful, with friends, we set forth—  
Then, on the height, comes the storm.  
Thunder crashes from rock  
To rock, the cataracts reply,  
Lightnings dazzle our eyes.  
Roaring torrents have breach'd  
The track, the stream-bed descends  
In the place where the wayfarer once  
Planted his footstep—the spray  
Boils o'er its borders ! aloft  
The unseen snow-beds dislodge  
Their hanging ruin ; alas,  
Havoc is made in our train !  
Friends, who set forth at our side,  
Falter, are lost in the storm.  
We, we only are left !  
With frowning foreheads, with lips  
Sternly compress'd, we strain on,  
On—and at nightfall at last  
Come to the end of our way,  
To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks ;  
Where the gaunt and taciturn host  
Stands on the threshold, the wind  
Shaking his thin white hairs—  
Holds his lantern to scan  
Our storm-beat figures, and asks :

Whom in our party we bring?  
Whom we have left in the snow?

Sadly we answer : We bring  
Only ourselves ! we lost  
Sight of the rest in the storm.  
Hardly ourselves we fought through,  
Stripp'd, without friends, as we are.  
Friends, companions, and train,  
The avalanche swept from our side.

But thou would'st not *alone*  
Be saved, my father ! *alone*  
Conquer and come to thy goal,  
Leaving the rest in the wild.  
We were weary, and we  
Fearful, and we in our march  
Fain to drop down and to die.  
Still thou turnedst, and still  
Beckonedst the trembler, and still  
Gavest the weary thy hand.

If, in the paths of the world,  
Stones might have wounded thy feet,  
Toil or dejection have tried  
Thy spirit, of that we saw  
Nothing—to us thou wast still  
Cheerful, and helpful, and firm !  
Therefore to thee it was given  
Many to save with thyself ;  
And, at the end of thy day,  
O faithful shepherd ! to come,  
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

And through thee I believe  
In the noble and great who are gone ;  
Pure souls honour'd and blest  
By former ages, who else—  
Such, so soulless, so poor,  
Is the race of men whom I see—  
Seem'd but a dream of the heart,  
Seem'd but a cry of desire.  
Yes ! I believe that there lived  
Others like thee in the past,  
Not like the men of the crowd  
Who all round me to-day  
Bluster or cringe, and make life  
Hideous, and arid, and vile ;  
But souls temper'd with fire,  
Fervent, heroic, and good,  
Helpers and friends of mankind.

Servants of God !—or sons  
Shall I not call you ? because  
Not as servants ye knew  
Your Father's innermost mind,  
His, who unwillingly sees  
One of his little ones lost—  
Yours is the praise, if mankind  
Hath not as yet in its march  
Fainted, and fallen, and died !

See ! In the rocks of the world  
Marches the host of mankind,  
A feeble, wavering line.  
Where are they tending ?—A God  
Marshall'd them, gave them their goal.  
Ah, but the way is so long !

Years they have been in the wild!  
Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks,  
Rising all round, overawe;  
Factions divide them, their host  
Threatens to break, to dissolve.  
—Ah, keep, keep them combined!  
Else, of the myriads who fill  
That army, not one shall arrive;  
Sole they shall stray; in the rocks  
Stagger for ever in vain,  
Die one by one in the waste.

Then, in such hour of need  
Of your fainting, dispirited race,  
Ye, like angels, appear,  
Radiant with ardour divine!  
Beacons of hope, ye appear!  
Languor is not in your heart,  
Weakness is not in your word,  
Weariness not on your brow.  
Ye aight in our van! at your voice,  
Panic, despair, flee away.  
Ye move through the ranks, recall  
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,  
Praise, re-inspire the brave!  
Order, courage, return.  
Eyes rekindling, and prayers,  
Follow your steps as ye go.  
Ye fill up the gaps in our files,  
Strengthen the wavering line,  
Stablish, continue our march,  
On, to the bound of the waste,  
On, to the City of God.

## HEINE'S GRAVE

"*HENRI HEINE*"——'tis here !  
That black tombstone, the name  
Carved there—no more ! and the smooth,  
Swarded alleys, the limes  
Touch'd with yellow by hot  
Summer, but under them still,  
In September's bright afternoon,  
Shadow, and verdure, and cool.  
Trim Montmartre ! the faint  
Murmur of Paris outside ;  
Crisp everlasting-flowers,  
Yellow and black, on the graves.

Half blind, palsied, in pain,  
Hither to come, from the streets'  
Uproar, surely not loath  
Wast thou, Heine !—to lie  
Quiet, to ask for closed  
Shutters, and darken'd room,  
And cool drinks, and an eased  
Posture, and opium, no more ;  
Hither to come, and to sleep  
Under the wings of Renown.

Ah ! not little, when pain  
Is most quelling, and man  
Easily quell'd, and the fine  
Temper of genius so soon  
Thrills at each smart, is the praise,  
Not to have yielded to pain !  
No small boast, for a weak

Son of mankind, to the earth  
 Pinn'd by the thunder, to rear  
 His bolt-scathed front to the stars ;  
 And, undaunted, retort  
 'Gainst thick-crashing, insane,  
 Tyrannous tempests of bale,  
 Arrowy lightnings of soul.

Hark ! through the alley resounds  
 Mocking laughter ! A film  
 Creeps o'er the sunshine ; a breeze  
 Ruffles the warm afternoon,  
 Saddens my soul with its chill.  
 Gibing of spirits in scorn  
 Shakes every leaf of the grove,  
 Mars the benignant repose  
 Of this amiable home of the dead.

Bitter spirits, ye claim  
 Heine?—Alas, he is yours !  
 Only a moment I long'd  
 Here in the quiet to snatch  
 From such mates the outworn  
 Poet, and steep him in calm.  
 Only a moment ! I knew  
 Whose he was who is here  
 Buried—I knew he was yours !  
 Ah, I knew that I saw  
 Here no sepulchre built  
 In the laurell'd rock, o'er the blue  
 Naples bay, for a sweet  
 Tender Virgil ! no tomb  
 On Ravenna sands, in the shade  
 Of Ravenna pines, for a high



Austere Dante ! no grave  
By the Avon side, in the bright  
Stratford meadows, for thee,  
Shakespeare ! loveliest of souls,  
Peerless in radiance, in joy.

What, then, so harsh and malign,  
Heine ! distils from thy life ?  
Poisons the peace of the grave ?

I chide with thee not, that thy sharp  
Upbraidings often assail'd  
England, my country—for we,  
Heavy and sad, for her sons,  
Long since, deep in our hearts,  
Echo the blame of her foes.  
We, too, sigh that she flags ;  
We, too, say that she now—  
Scarce comprehending the voice  
Of her greatest, golden-mouth'd sons  
Of a former age any more—  
Stupidly travels her round  
Of mechanic business, and lets  
Slow die out of her life  
Glory, and genius, and joy.

So thou arraign'st her, her foe ;  
So we arraign her, her sons.

Yes, we arraign her ! but she,  
The weary Titan, with deaf  
Ears, and labour-dimm'd eyes,  
Regarding neither to right  
Nor left, goes passively by,  
Staggering on to her goal ;

Bearing on shoulders immense,  
 Atlanteän, the load,  
 Wellnigh not to be borne,  
 Of the too vast orb of her fate.

But was it thou—I think  
 Surely it was!—that bard  
 Unnamed, who, Goethe said,  
*Had every other gift, but wanted love ;*  
 Love, without which the tongue  
 Even of angels sounds amiss ?

Charm is the glory which makes  
 Song of the poet divine,  
 Love is the fountain of charm.  
 How without charm wilt thou draw,  
 Poet ! the world to thy way ?  
 Not by the lightnings of wit—  
 Not by the thunder of scorn !  
 These to the world, too, are given ;  
 Wit it possesses, and scorn—  
 Charm is the poet's alone.  
*Hollow and dull are the great,*  
*And artists envious, and the mob profane.*  
 We know all this, we know !  
 Cam'st thou from heaven, O child  
 Of light ! but this to declare ?  
 Alas, to help us forget  
 Such barren knowledge awhile,  
 God gave the poet his song !

Therefore a secret unrest  
 Tortured thee, brilliant and bold !  
 Therefore triumph itself

Tasted amiss to thy soul.  
Therefore, with blood of thy foes,  
Trickled in silence thine own.  
Therefore the victor's heart  
Broke on the field of his fame.

Ah ! as of old, from the pomp  
Of Italian Milan, the fair  
Flower of marble of white  
Southern palaces—steps  
Border'd by statues, and walks  
Terraced, and orange-bowers  
Heavy with fragrance—the blond  
German Kaiser full oft  
Long'd himself back to the fields,  
Rivers, and high-roof'd towns  
Of his native Germany ; so,  
So, how often ! from hot  
Paris drawing-rooms, and lamps  
Blazing, and brilliant crowds,  
Starr'd and jewell'd, of men  
Famous, of women the queens  
Of dazzling converse—from fumes  
Of praise, hot, heady fumes, to the poor brain  
That mount, that madden—how oft  
Heine's spirit outworn  
Long'd itself out of the din,  
Back to the tranquil, the cool  
Far German home of his youth !

See ! in the May-afternoon,  
O'er the fresh, short turf of the Hartz,  
A youth, with the foot of youth,  
Heine ! thou climbest again !

Up, through the tall dark firs  
Warming their heads in the sun,  
Chequering the grass with their shade—  
Up, by the stream, with its huge  
Moss-hung boulders, and thin  
Musical water half-hid—  
Up, o'er the rock-strewn slope,  
With the sinking sun, and the air  
Chill, and the shadows now  
Long on the grey hill-side—  
To the stone-roof'd hut at the top!

Or, yet later, in watch  
On the roof of the Brocken-tower  
Thou standest, gazing!—to see  
The broad red sun, over field,  
Forest, and city, and spire,  
And mist-track'd stream of the wide,  
Wide German land, going down  
In a bank of vapours——again  
Standest, at nightfall, alone!

Or, next morning, with limbs  
Rested by slumber, and heart  
Freshen'd and light with the May,  
O'er the gracious spurs coming down  
Of the Lower Hartz, among oaks,  
And beechen coverts, and copse  
Of hazels green in whose depth  
Ilse, the fairy transform'd,  
In a thousand water-breaks light  
Pours her petulant youth—  
Climbing the rock which juts  
O'er the valley, the dizzily perch'd

Rock—to its iron cross  
 Once more thou cling'st ; to the Cross  
 Clingest ! with smiles, with a sigh !

Goethe, too, had been there.<sup>24</sup>  
 In the long-past winter he came  
 To the frozen Hartz, with his soul  
 Passionate, eager—his youth  
 All in ferment !—but he  
 Destined to work and to live  
 Left it, and thou, alas !  
 Only to laugh and to die.

But something prompts me : Not thus  
 Take leave of Heine ! not thus  
 Speak the last word at his grave !  
 Not in pity, and not  
 With half censure—with awe  
 Hail, as it passes from earth  
 Scattering lightnings, that soul !

The Spirit of the world,  
 Beholding the absurdity of men—  
 Their vaunts, their feats—let a sardonic smile,  
 For one short moment, wander o'er his lips.  
*That smile was Heine!*—for its earthly hour  
 The strange guest sparkled ; now 'tis pass'd away.

That was Heine ! and we,  
 Myriads who live, who have lived,  
 What are we all, but a mood,  
 A single mood, of the life  
 Of the Spirit in whom we exist,  
 Who alone is all things in one ?

Spirit, who fillest us all !  
 Spirit, who utterest in each  
 New-coming son of mankind  
 Such of thy thoughts as thou wilt !  
 O thou, one of whose moods,  
 Bitter and strange, was the life  
 Of Heine—his strange, alas,  
 His bitter life !—may a life  
 Other and milder be mine !  
 May'st thou a mood more serene,  
 Happier, have utter'd in mine !  
 May'st thou the rapture of peace  
 Deep have embreathed at its core ;  
 Made it a ray of thy thought,  
 Made it a beat of thy joy !

#### STANZAS FROM THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE

THROUGH Alpine meadows soft-suffused  
 With rain, where thick the crocus blows,  
 Past the dark forges long disused,  
 The mule-track from Saint Laurent goes.  
 The bridge is cross'd, and slow we ride,  
 Through forest, up the mountain-side.

The autumnal evening darkens round,  
 The wind is up, and drives the rain ;  
 While, hark ! far down, with strangled sound  
 Doth the Dead Guier's stream complain,  
 Where that wet smoke, among the woods,  
 Over his boiling cauldron broods.

Swift rush the spectral vapours white  
 Past limestone scars with ragged pines,  
 Showing—then blotting from our sight!—  
 Halt—through the cloud-drift something shines!  
 High in the valley, wet and drear,  
 The huts of Courrierie appear.

*Strike leftward!* cries our guide; and higher  
 Mounts up the stony forest-way.  
 At last the encircling trees retire;  
 Look! through the showery twilight grey  
 What pointed roofs are these advance?—  
 A palace of the Kings of France?

Approach, for what we seek is here!  
 Alight, and sparely sup, and wait  
 For rest in this outbuilding near;  
 Then cross the sward and reach that gate.  
 Knock; pass the wicket! Thou art come  
 To the Carthusians' world-famed home.

The silent courts, where night and day  
 Into their stone-carved basins cold  
 The splashing icy fountains play—  
 The humid corridors behold!  
 Where, ghostlike in the deepening night,  
 Cowl'd forms brush by in gleaming white.

The chapel, where no organ's peal  
 Invests the stern and naked prayer—  
 With penitential cries they kneel  
 And wrestle; rising then, with bare  
 And white uplifted faces stand,  
 Passing the Host from hand to hand;

Each takes, and then his visage wan  
 Is buried in his cowl once more.  
 The cells!—the suffering Son of Man  
 Upon the walls—the knee-worn floor—  
 And where they sleep, that wooden bed,  
 Which shall their coffin be, when dead!

The library, where tract and tome  
 Not to feed priestly pride are there,  
 To hymn the conquering march of Rome,  
 Nor yet to amuse, as ours are!  
 They paint of souls the inner strife;  
 Their drops of blood, their death in life.

The garden, overgrown—yet mild,  
 See, fragrant herbs are flowering there!  
 Strong children of the Alpine wild  
 Whose culture is the brethren's care;  
 Of human tasks their only one,  
 And cheerful works beneath the sun.

Those halls, too, destined to contain  
 Each its own pilgrim-host of old,  
 From England, Germany, or Spain—  
 All are before me! I behold  
 The House, the Brotherhood austere!  
 —And what am I, that I am here?

For rigorous teachers seized my youth,  
 And purged its faith, and trimm'd its fire,  
 Show'd me the high, white star of Truth,  
 There bade me gaze, and there aspire.  
 Even now their whispers pierce the gloom:  
*What dost thou in this living tomb?*



Forgive me, masters of the mind !  
At whose behest I long ago  
So much unlearnt, so much resign'd—  
I come not here to be your foe !  
I seek these anchorites, not in rŭth,  
To curse and to deny your truth ;

Not as their friend, or child, I speak !  
But as, on some far northern strand,  
Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek  
In pity and mournful awe might stand  
Before some fallen Runic stone—  
For both were faiths, and both are gone.

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born,  
With nowhere yet to rest my head,  
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.  
Their faith, my tears, the world deride—  
I come to shed them at their side.

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound,  
Ye solemn seats of holy pain !  
Take me, cowl'd forms, and fence me round,  
Till I possess my soul again ;  
Till free my thoughts before me roll,  
Not chafed by hourly false control !

For the world cries your faith is now  
But a dead time's exploded dream ;  
My melancholy, sciolists say,  
Is a pass'd mode, an outworn theme—  
As if the world had ever had  
A faith, or sciolists been sad !

Ah, if it *be* pass'd, take away,  
 At least, the restlessness, the pain ;  
 Be man henceforth no more a prey  
 To these out-dated stings again !  
 The nobleness of grief is gone—  
 Ah, leave us not the fret alone !

But—if you cannot give us ease—  
 Last of the race of them who grieve  
 Here leave us to die out with these  
 Last of the people who believe !  
 Silent, while years engrave the brow ;  
 Silent—the best are silent now.

Achilles ponders in his tent,  
 The kings of modern thought are dumb ;  
 Silent they are, though not content,  
 And wait to see the future come.  
 They have the grief men had of yore,  
 But they contend and cry no more.

Our fathers water'd with their tears  
 This sea of time whereon we sail,  
 Their voices were in all men's ears  
 Who pass'd within their puissant hail.  
 Still the same ocean round us raves,  
 But we stand mute, and watch the waves.

For what avail'd it, all the noise  
 And outcry of the former men ?—  
 Say, have their sons achieved more joys,  
 Say, is life lighter now than then ?  
 The sufferers died, they left their pain—  
 The pangs which tortured them remain.

What helps it now, that Byron bore,  
 With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,  
 Through Europe to the Ætolian shore  
 And call us the pageant of his bleeding heart?  
 Too late to  
 That thousands counted every groan,  
 Whose ben-  
 And Europe made his woe her own?

What boot it, Shelley! that the breeze  
 Carried thy lovely wail away,  
 Musical through Italian trees  
 Which fringe thy soft blue Spezzian bay?  
 In her arms of thy distress  
 Have restless hearts one throb the less?

Can we easier, to have read,  
 O Obermann! the sad, stern page,  
 Which tells us how thou hid'd'st thy head  
 From the fierce tempest of thine age  
 In the lone brakes of Fontainebleau,  
 Or chalets near the Alpine snow?

Ye slumber in your silent grave!—  
 The world, which for an idle day  
 Grace to your mood of sadness gave,  
 STANZ Long since hath flung her weeds away.  
 The eternal trifler breaks your spell;  
 ! But we—we learnt your lore too well!

Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,  
 ætæ More fortunate, alas! than we,  
 Which without hardness will be sage,  
 And gay without frivolity.  
 Sons of the world, oh, speed those years;  
 But, while we wait, allow our tears!

Allow them ! We admire with awe  
 The exulting thunder of your race ;  
 You give the universe your law,  
 You triumph over time and space,  
 Your pride of life, your tireless power,  
 We laud them, but they are not ours.

We are like children rear'd in shade  
 Beneath some old-world abbey wall,  
 Forgotten in a forest-glade,  
 And secret from the eyes of all.  
 Deep, deep the greenwood round them lies,  
 Their abbey, and its close of graves.

But, where the road runs near the stream,  
 Oft through the trees they catch a glance  
 Of passing troops in the sun's beam,  
 Pennon, and plume, and flashing lance,  
 Forth to the world those soldiers fare,  
 To life, to cities, and to war !

And through the wood, another way,  
 Faint bugle-notes from far are borne,  
 Where hunters gather, staghounds bay,  
 Round some fair forest-lodge at morn.  
 Gay dames are there, in sylvan green ;  
 Laughter and cries—those notes between !

The banners flashing through the trees  
 Make their blood dance and chain their eyes  
 That bugle-music on the breeze  
 Arrests them with a charm'd surprise.  
 Banner by turns and bugle woo :  
*Ye shy recluses, follow too !*

O children, what do ye reply?—  
 " Action and pleasure, will ye roam  
 Through these secluded dells to cry  
 And call us?—but too late ye come!  
 Too late for us your call ye blow,  
 Whose bent was taken long ago.

" Long since we pace this shadow'd nave ;  
 We watch those yellow tapers shine,  
 Emblems of hope over the grave,  
 In the high altar's depth divine ;  
 The organ carries to our ear  
 Its accents of another sphere.

" Fenced early in this cloistral round  
 Of reverie, of shade, of prayer,  
 How should we grow in other ground ?  
 How can we flower in foreign air ?  
 —Pass, banners, pass, and bugles, cease ;  
 And leave our desert to its peace !"

STANZAS IN MEMORY OF THE AUTHOR OF  
 " OBERMANN " <sup>25</sup>

NOVEMBER, 1849

IN front the awful Alpine track  
 Crawls up its rocky stair ;  
 The autumn storm-winds drive the rack,  
 Close o'er it, in the air.

Behind are the abandon'd baths <sup>26</sup>  
Mute in their meadows lone ;  
The leaves are on the valley-paths,  
The mists are on the Rhone—

The white mists rolling like a sea !  
I hear the torrents roar.  
—Yes, Obermann, all speaks of thee ;  
I feel thee near once more !

I turn thy leaves ! I feel their breath  
Once more upon me roll ;  
That air of languor, cold, and death,  
Which brooded o'er thy soul.

Fly hence, poor wretch, whoe'er thou art,  
Condemn'd to cast about,  
All shipwreck in thy own weak heart,  
For comfort from without !

A fever in these pages burns  
Beneath the calm they feign ;  
A wounded human spirit turns,  
Here, on its bed of pain.

Yes, though the virgin mountain-air  
Fresh through these pages blows ;  
Though to these leaves the glaciers spare  
The soul of their white snows ;

Though here a mountain-murmur swells  
Of many a dark-bough'd pine ;  
Though, as you read, you hear the bells  
Of the high-pasturing kine—

Yet, through the hum of torrent lone,  
 And brooding mountain-bee,  
 There sobs I know not what ground-tone  
 Of human agony.

Is it for this, because the sound  
 Is fraught too deep with pain,  
 That, Obermann ! the world around  
 So little loves thy strain ?

Some secrets may the poet tell,  
 For the world loves new ways ;  
 To tell too deep ones is not well—  
 It knows not what he says.

Yet, of the spirits who have reign'd  
 In this our troubled day,  
 I know but two, who have attain'd,  
 Save thee, to see their way.

By England's lakes, in grey old age,  
 His quiet home one keeps ;  
 And one, the strong much-toiling sage,  
 In German Weimar sleeps.

But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken  
 From half of human fate ;  
 And Goethe's course few sons of men  
 May think to emulate.

For he pursued a lonely road,  
 His eyes on Nature's plan ;  
 Neither made man too much a God,  
 Nor God too much a man.

Strong was he, with a spirit free  
From mists, and sane, and clear ;  
Clearer, how much ! than ours—yet we  
Have a worse course to steer.

For though his manhood bore the blast  
Of a tremendous time,  
Yet in a tranquil world was pass'd  
His tenderer youthful prime.

But we, brought forth and rear'd in hours  
Of change, alarm, surprise—  
What shelter to grow ripe is ours ?  
What leisure to grow wise ?

Like children bathing on the shore,  
Buried a wave beneath,  
The second wave succeeds, before  
We have had time to breathe.

Too fast we live, too much are tried,  
Too harass'd, to attain  
Wordsworth's sweet calm, or Goethe's wide  
And luminous view to gain.

And then we turn, thou sadder sage,  
To thee ! we feel thy spell !  
—The hopeless tangle of our age,  
Thou too hast scann'd it well !

Immoveable thou sittest, still  
As death, composed to bear !  
Thy head is clear, thy feeling chill,  
And icy thy despair.



Yes, as the son of Thetis said,  
 I hear thee saying now :  
*Greater by far than thou art dead ;*  
*Strive not ! die also thou !*

Ah ! two desires toss about  
 The poet's feverish blood.  
 One drives him to the world without,  
 And one to solitude.

*The glow, he cries, the thrill of life,*  
*Where, where do these abound ?—*  
 Not in the world, not in the strife  
 Of men, shall they be found.

He who hath watch'd, not shared, the strife,  
 Knows how the day hath gone.  
 He only lives with the world's life,  
 Who hath renounced his own.

To thee we come, then ! Clouds are roll'd  
 Where thou, O seer ! art set ;  
 Thy realm of thought is drear and cold—  
 The world is colder yet !

And thou hast pleasures, too, to share  
 With those who come to thee—  
 Balms floating on thy mountain-air,  
 And healing sights to see.

How often, where the slopes are green  
 On Jaman, hast thou sate  
 By some high chalet-door, and seen  
 The summer-day grow late ;

And darkness steal o'er the wet grass  
With the pale crocus starr'd,  
And reach that glimmering sheet of glass  
Beneath the piny sward,

Lake Lemman's waters, far below !  
And watch'd the rosy light  
Fade from the distant peaks of snow ;  
And on the air of night

Heard accents of the eternal tongue  
Through the pine branches play—  
Listen'd, and felt thyself grow young !  
Listen'd and wept——Away !

Away the dreams that but deceive  
And thou, sad guide, adieu !  
I go, fate drives me ; but I leave  
Half of my life with you.

We, in some unknown Power's employ,  
Move on a rigorous line ;  
Can neither, when we will, enjoy,  
Nor, when we will, resign.

I in the world must live ; but thou,  
Thou melancholy shade !  
Wilt not, if thou canst see me now,  
Condemn me, nor upbraid.

For thou art gone away from earth,  
And place with those dost claim,  
The Children of the Second Birth,  
Whom the world could not tame ;

And with that small, transfigured band,  
Whom many a different way  
Conducted to their common land,  
Thou learn'st to think as they.

Christian and pagan, king and slave,  
Soldier and anchorite,  
Distinctions we esteem so grave,  
Are nothing in their sight.

They do not ask, who pined unseen,  
Who was on action hurl'd,  
Whose one bond is, that all have been  
Unspotted by the world.

There without anger thou wilt see  
Him who obeys thy spell  
No more, so he but rest, like thee,  
Unsoil'd !—and so, farewell.

Farewell !—Whether thou now liest near  
That much-loved inland sea,  
The ripples of whose blue waves cheer  
Vevey and Meillerie :

And in that gracious region bland,  
Where with clear-rustling wave  
The scented pines of Switzerland  
Stand dark round thy green grave,

Between the dusty vineyard-walls  
Issuing on that green place  
The early peasant still recalls  
The pensive stranger's face,

And stoops to clear thy moss-grown date  
 Ere he plods on again ;—  
 Or whether, by maligner fate,  
 Among the swarms of men,  
 Where between granite terraces  
 The blue Seine rolls her wave,  
 The Capital of Pleasure sees  
 The hardly-heard-of grave ;—  
 Farewell ! Under the sky we part,  
 In the stern Alpine dell.  
 O unstrung will ! O broken heart !  
 A last, a last farewell !

### OBERMANN ONCE MORE

(COMPOSED MANY YEARS AFTER THE PRECEDING)

*Savez-vous quelque bien qui console du regret d'un monde ?*

OBERMANN.

GLION ?—Ah, twenty years, it cuts <sup>27</sup>  
 All meaning from a name !  
 White houses prank where once were huts.  
 Glion, but not the same !  
 And yet I know not ! All unchanged  
 The turf, the pines, the sky !  
 The hills in their old order ranged ;  
 The lake, with Chillon by !  
 And, 'neath those chestnut-trees, where stiff  
 And stony mounts the way,  
 The crackling husk-heaps burn, as if  
 I left them yesterday !

Across the valley, on that slope,  
The huts of Avant shine !  
Its pines, under their branches, ope  
Ways for the pasturing kine.

Full-foaming milk-pails, Alpine fare,  
Sweet heaps of fresh-cut grass,  
Invite to rest the traveller there  
Before he climb the pass—

The gentian-flower'd pass, its crown  
With yellow spires aflame ;<sup>28</sup>  
Whence drops the path to Allière down,  
And walls where Byron came,<sup>29</sup>

By their green river, who doth change  
His birth-name just below ;  
Orchard, and croft, and full-stored grange  
Nursed by his pastoral flow.

But stop !—to fetch back thoughts that stray  
Beyond this gracious bound,  
The cone of Jaman, pale and grey,  
See, in the blue profound !

Ah, Jaman ! delicately tall  
Above his sun-warm'd firs—  
What thoughts to me his rocks recall,  
What memories he stirs !

And who but thou must be, in truth,  
Obermann ! with me here ?  
Thou master of my wandering youth,  
But left this many a year !

Yes, I forget the world's work wrought,  
 Its warfare waged with pain ;  
 An eremite with thee, in thought  
 Once more I slip my chain,

And to thy mountain-chalet come,  
 And lie beside its door,  
 And hear the wild bee's Alpine hum,  
 And thy sad, tranquil lore !

Again I feel the words inspire  
 Their mournful calm ; serene,  
 Yet tinged with infinite desire  
 For all that *might* have been—

The harmony from which man swerved  
 Made his life's rule once more !  
 The universal order served,  
 Earth happier than before !

—While thus I mused, night gently ran  
 Down over hill and wood.  
 Then, still and sudden, Obermann  
 On the grass near me stood.

Those pensive features well I knew,  
 On my mind, years before,  
 Imaged so oft ! imaged so true !  
 —A shepherd's garb he wore,

A mountain-flower was in his hand,  
 A book was in his breast.  
 Bent on my face, with gaze which scann'd  
 My soul, his eyes did rest.

“And is it thou,” he cried, “so long  
Held by the world which we  
Loved not, who turnest from the throng  
Back to thy youth and me?”

“And from thy world, with heart opprest,  
Chooseth thou *now* to turn?—  
Ah me! we anchorites read things best,  
Clearest their course discern!

“Thou fledst me when the ungenial earth,  
Man’s work-place, lay in gloom.  
Return’st thou in her hour of birth,  
Of hopes and hearts in bloom?”

“Perceiv’st thou not the change of day?  
Ah! Carry back thy ken,  
What, some two thousand years! Survey  
The world as it was then!

“Like ours it look’d in outward air.  
Its head was clear and true,  
Sumptuous its clothing, rich its fare,  
No pause its action knew;

“Stout was its arm, each thew and bone  
Seem’d puissant and alive—  
But, ah! its heart, its heart was stone,  
And so it could not thrive!

“On that hard Pagan world disgust  
And secret loathing fell.  
Deep weariness and sated lust  
Made human life a hell.

“ In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,  
The Roman noble lay ;  
He drove abroad, in furious guise,  
Along the Appian way.

“ He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,  
And crown'd his hair with flowers—  
No easier nor no quicker pass'd  
The impracticable hours.

“ The brooding East with awe beheld  
Her impious younger world.  
The Roman tempest swell'd and swell'd,  
And on her head was hurl'd.

“ The East bow'd low before the blast  
In patient, deep disdain ;  
She let the legions thunder past,  
And plunged in thought again.

“ So well she mused, a morning broke  
Across her spirit grey ;  
A conquering, new-born joy awoke,  
And fill'd her life with day.

“ ‘ Poor world,’ she cried, ‘ so deep accurst,  
That runn'st from pole to pole  
To seek a draught to slake thy thirst—  
Go, seek it in thy soul !

“ She heard it, the victorious West,  
In crown and sword array'd !  
She felt the void which mined her breast,  
She shiver'd and obey'd.



“ She veil’d her eagles, snapp’d her sword,  
And laid her sceptre down ;  
Her stately purple she abhorr’d,  
And her imperial crown.

“ She broke her flutes, she stopp’d her sports,  
Her artists could not please ;  
She tore her books, she shut her courts,  
She fled her palaces ;

“ Lust of the eye and pride of life  
She left it all behind,  
And hurried, torn with inward strife,  
The wilderness to find.

“ Tears wash’d the trouble from her face !  
She changed into a child !  
'Mid weeds and wrecks she stood—a place  
Of ruin—but she smiled !

“ Oh, had I lived in that great day,  
How had its glory new  
Fill’d earth and heaven, and caught away  
My ravish’d spirit too !

“ No thoughts that to the world belong  
Had stood against the wave  
Of love which set so deep and strong  
From Christ’s then open grave.

“ No cloister-floor of humid stone  
Had been too cold for me.  
For me no Eastern desert lone  
Had been too far to flee.

“ No lonely life had pass'd too slow,  
When I could hourly scan  
Upon his Cross, with head sunk low,  
That nail'd, thorn-crowned Man !

“ Could see the Mother with her Child  
Whose tender winning arts  
Have to his little arms beguiled  
So many wounded hearts !

“ And centuries came and ran their course,  
And unspent all that time  
Still, still went forth that Child's dear force,  
And still was at its prime.

“ Ay, ages long endured his span  
Of life—'tis true received—  
That gracious Child, that thorn-crown'd Man !  
—He lived while we believed.

“ While we believed, on earth he went,  
And open stood his grave.  
Men call'd from chamber, church, and tent ;  
And Christ was by to save.

“ Now he is dead ! Far hence he lies  
In the lorn Syrian town ;  
And on his grave, with shining eyes,  
The Syrian stars look down.

“ In vain men still, with hoping new,  
Regard his death-place dumb,  
And say the stone is not yet to,  
And wait for words to come.

“ Ah, o’er that silent sacred land,  
Of sun, and arid stone,  
And crumbling wall, and sultry sand,  
Sounds now one word alone !

*“ Unduped of fancy, henceforth man  
Must labour !—must resign  
His all too human creeds, and scan  
Simply the way divine !*

“ But slow that tide of common thought,  
Which bathed our life, retired ;  
Slow, slow the old world wore to nought,  
And pulse by pulse expired.

“ Its frame yet stood without a breach  
When blood and warmth were fled ;  
And still it spake its wonted speech—  
But every word was dead.

“ And oh, we cried, that on this corse  
Might fall a freshening storm !  
Rive its dry bones, and with new force  
A new-sprung world inform !

“—Down came the storm ! O’er France it pass’d  
In sheets of scathing fire ;  
All Europe felt that fiery blast,  
And shook as it rush’d by her.

“ Down came the storm ! In ruins fell  
The worn-out world we knew.

It pass’d, that elemental swell !  
Again appear’d the blue ;

“The sun shone in the new-wash'd sky,  
And what from heaven saw he?  
Blocks of the past, like icebergs high,  
Float on a rolling sea!

“Upon them plies the race of man  
All it before endeavour'd ;  
'Ye live,' I cried, 'ye work and plan,  
And know not ye are sever'd !

“ ‘Poor fragments of a broken world  
Whereon men pitch their tent !  
Why were ye too to death not hurl'd  
When your world's day was spent ?

“ ‘That glow of central fire is done  
Which with its fusing flame  
Knit all your parts, and kept you one—  
But ye, ye are the same !

“ ‘The past, its mask of union on,  
Had ceased to live and thrive.  
The past, its mask of union gone,  
Say, is it more alive ?

“ ‘Your creeds are dead, your rites are dead,  
Your social order too !  
Where tarries he, the Power who said :  
*See, I make all things new ?*

“ ‘The millions suffer still, and grieve,  
And what can helpers heal  
With old-world cures men half believe  
For woes they wholly feel ?

“ ‘And yet men have such need of joy !  
But joy whose grounds are true ;  
And joy that should all hearts employ  
As when the past was new.

“ ‘Ah, not the emotion of that past,  
Its common hope, were vain !  
Some new such hope must dawn at last,  
Or man must toss in pain.

“ ‘But now the old is out of date,  
The new is not yet born,  
And who can be *alone* elate,  
While the world lies forlorn ?’

“Then to the wilderness I fled.—  
There among Alpine snows  
And pastoral huts I hid my head,  
And sought and found repose.

“It was not yet the appointed hour.  
Sad, patient, and resign’d,  
I watch’d the crocus fade and flower,  
I felt the sun and wind.

“The day I lived in was not mine,  
Man gets no second day.  
In dreams I saw the future shine—  
But ah ! I could not stay !

“Action I had not, followers, fame ;  
I pass’d obscure, alone.  
The after-world forgets my name,  
Nor do I wish it known.

“ Composed to bear, I lived and died,  
And knew my life was vain,  
With fate I murmur not, nor chide,  
At Sèvres by the Seine

“ (If Paris that brief flight allow)  
My humble tomb explore !  
It bears : *Eternity, be thou*  
*My refuge !* and no more.

“ But thou, whom fellowship of mood  
Did make from haunts of strife  
Come to my mountain-solitude,  
And learn my frustrate life ;

“ O thou, who, ere thy flying span  
Was past of cheerful youth,  
Didst find the solitary man  
And love his cheerless truth—

“ Despair not thou as I despair'd,  
Nor be cold gloom thy prison !  
Forward the gracious hours have fared,  
And see ! the sun is risen !

“ He breaks the winter of the past ;  
A green, new earth appears.  
Millions, whose life in ice lay fast,  
Have thoughts, and smiles, and tears.

“ What though there still need effort, strife ?  
Though much be still unwon ?  
Yet warm it mounts, the hour of life !  
Death's frozen hour is done !

“The world’s great order dawns in sheen,  
After long darkness rude,  
Divinelier imaged, clearer seen,  
With happier zeal pursued.

“With hope extinct and brow composed  
I mark’d the present die ;  
Its term of life was nearly closed,  
Yet it had more than I.

“But thou, though to the world’s new hour  
Thou come with aspect marr’d,  
Shorn of the joy, the bloom, the power  
Which best befits its bard—

“Though more than half thy years be past,  
And spent thy youthful prime ;  
Though, round thy firmer manhood cast,  
Hang weeds of our sad time

“Whereof thy youth felt all the spell,  
And traversed all the shade—  
Though late, though dimm’d, though weak, yet tell  
Hope to a world new-made !

“Help it to fill that deep desire,  
The want which rack’d our brain,  
Consumed our heart with thirst like fire,  
Immedicable pain :

“Which to the wilderness drove out  
Our life, to Alpine snow,  
And palsied all our word with doubt,  
And all our work with woe—

“What still of strength is left, employ  
 That end to help attain :  
*One common wave of thought and joy*  
*Lifting mankind again !”*

—The vision ended. I awoke  
 As out of sleep, and no  
 Voice moved ;—only the torrent broke  
 The silence, far below.

Soft darkness on the turf did lie.  
 Solemn, o'er hut and wood,  
 In the yet star-sown nightly sky,  
 The peak of Jaman stood.

Still in my soul the voice I heard  
 Of Obermann !——away  
 I turned ; by some vague impulse stirr'd,  
 Along the rocks of Naye

Past Sonchaud's piny flanks I gaze  
 And the blanch'd summit bare  
 Of Malatrait, to where in haze  
 The Valais opens fair,

And the domed Velan, with his snows,  
 Behind the upcrowding hills,  
 Doth all the heavenly opening close  
 Which the Rhone's murmur fills ;—

And glorious there, without a sound,  
 Across the glimmering lake,  
 High in the Valais-depth profound,  
 I saw the morning break.



DRAMATIC POEMS



# M E R O P E

## A TRAGEDY

### STORY OF THE DRAMA

APOLLODORUS says:—“Cresphontes had not reigned long in Messenia when he was murdered, together with two of his sons. And Polyphontes reigned in his stead, he, too, being of the family of Hercules; and he had for his wife, against her will, Merope, the widow of the murdered king. But Merope had borne to Cresphontes a third son, called Æpytus; him she gave to her own father to bring up. He, when he came to man's estate, returned secretly to Messenia, and slew Polyphontes and the other murderers of his father.”

Hyginus says:—“Merope sent away and concealed her infant son. Polyphontes sought for him everywhere in vain. He, when he grew up, laid a plan to avenge the murder of his father and brothers. In pursuance of this plan he came to king Polyphontes and reported the death of the son of Cresphontes and Merope. The king ordered him to be hospitably entertained, intending to inquire further of him. He, being very tired, went to sleep, and an old man, who was the channel through whom the mother and son used to communicate, arrives at this moment in tears, bringing word to Merope that her son had disappeared from his protector's house, and was slain. Merope, believing that the sleeping stranger is the murderer of her son, comes into the guest-chamber with an axe, not knowing that he whom she would slay was her son; the old man recognised him, and withheld Merope from slaying him. The king, Polyphontes, rejoicing at the supposed death of Æpytus, celebrated a sacrifice; his guest, pretending to strike the sacrificial victim, slew the king, and so got back his father's kingdom.”

The events on which the action of the drama turns belong to the period of transition from the heroic and fabulous to the human and historic age of

Greece. The doings of the hero Hercules, the ancestor of the Messenian Æpytus, belong to fable; but the invasion of Peloponnesus by the Dorians under chiefs claiming to be descended from Hercules, and their settlement in Argos, Lacedæmon, and Messenia, belong to history. Æpytus is descended on the father's side from Hercules, Perseus, and the kings of Argos; on the mother's side from Pelasgus, and the aboriginal kings of Arcadia. Callisto, the daughter of the wicked Lycaon, and the mother, by Zeus, of Arcas, from whom the Arcadians took their name, was the granddaughter of Pelasgus. The birth of Arcas brought upon Callisto the anger of the virgin-goddess Artemis, whose service she followed: she was changed into a she-bear, and in this form was chased by her own son, grown to manhood. Zeus interposed, and the mother and son were removed from the earth, and placed among the stars. Callisto became the famous constellation of the Great Bear; her son became Arcturus, Arctophylax, or Boötes. From this son of Callisto were descended Cypselus, the maternal grandfather of Æpytus, and the children of Cypselus, Laïas and Merope.

The story of the life of Hercules, the paternal ancestor of Æpytus, is so well known that there is no need to record it. The reader will remember that, although entitled to the throne of Argos by right of descent from Perseus and Danaus, and to the thrones of Sparta and Messenia by right of conquest, Hercules yet passed his life in labours and wanderings, subjected by the decree of fate to the commands of his kinsman, the feeble and malignant Eurystheus. At his death he bequeathed to his offspring, the Heracleidæ, his own claims to the kingdoms of Peloponnesus, and to the persecution of Eurystheus. They at first sought shelter with Ceyx, king of Trachis; he was too weak to protect them, and they then took refuge at Athens. The Athenians refused to deliver them up at the demand of Eurystheus; he invaded Attica, and a battle was fought near Marathon, in which, after Macaria, a daughter of Hercules, had devoted herself for the preservation of her house, Eurystheus fell, and the Heracleidæ and their Athenian protectors were victorious. The memory of Macaria's self-sacrifices was perpetuated by the name of a spring of water on the plain of Marathon, the spring Macaria. The Heracleidæ then endeavoured to effect their return to Peloponnesus. Hyllus, the eldest of them, inquired of the oracle at Delphi respecting their return: he was told to return by the *narrow passage* and in the *third harvest*. Accordingly, in the third year from that time Hyllus led an army to the Isthmus of Corinth; but there he was encountered by an army of Achæians and Arcadians, and fell in single combat with Echemus, king of Tegea. Upon this defeat the Heracleidæ retired to northern Greece; there, after much wandering, they finally took refuge with Ægimius, king of the Dorians, who appears to have

been the fastest friend of their house, and whose Dorian warriors formed the army which at last achieved their return. But, for a hundred years from the date of their first attempt, the Heracleidæ were defeated in their successive invasions of Peloponnesus. Cleolaus and Aristomachus, the son and grandson of Hyllus, fell in unsuccessful expeditions. At length the sons of Aristomachus, Temenus, Cresphontes, and Aristodemus, when grown up, repaired to Delphi and taxed the oracle with the non-fulfilment of the promise made to their ancestor Hyllus. But Apollo replied that his oracle had been misunderstood; for that by the *third harvest* he had meant the third generation, and by the *narrow passage* he had meant the straits of the Corinthian Gulf. After this explanation the sons of Aristomachus built a fleet at Naupactus; and finally, in the hundredth year from the death of Hyllus and the eightieth from the fall of Troy, the invasion was again attempted and was this time successful. The son of Orestes, Tisamenus, who ruled both Argos and Lacedæmon, fell in battle; many of his vanquished subjects left their homes and took refuge in Achaia.

The spoil was now to be divided among the conquerors. Aristodemus, the youngest of the sons of Aristomachus, did not survive to enjoy his share. He was slain at Delphi by the sons of Pylades and Electra, the kinsman, through their mother, of the house of Agamemnon, that house which the Heracleidæ with their Dorian army had dispossessed. The claims of Aristodemus descended to his two sons, Procles and Eurysthenes, children under the guardianship of their maternal uncle, Theras. Temenus, the eldest of the sons of Aristomachus, took the kingdom of Argos. For the two remaining kingdoms, that of Sparta and that of Messenia, his two nephews, who were to rule jointly, and their uncle Cresphontes, had to cast lots. Cresphontes wished to have the fertile Messenia, and induced his brother to acquiesce in a trick which secured it to him. The lot of Cresphontes and that of his two nephews were to be placed in a water-jar, and thrown out. Messenia was to belong to him whose lot came out first. With the connivance of Temenus, Cresphontes marked as his own lot a pellet composed of baked clay, as the lot of his nephews, a pellet of unbaked clay; the unbaked pellet was of course dissolved in the water, while the brick pellet fell out alone. Messenia, therefore, was assigned to Cresphontes.

Messenia was at this time ruled by Melanthus, a descendant of Neleus. This ancestor, a prince of the great house of Æolus, had come from Thessaly and succeeded to the Messenian throne on the failure of the previous dynasty. Melanthus and his race were thus foreigners in Messenia and were unpopular. His subjects offered little or no opposition to the invading Dorians; Melanthus abandoned his kingdom to Cresphontes, and retired to Athens.

Cresphontes married Merope, whose native country, Arcadia, was not affected by the Dorian invasion. This marriage, the issue of which was three sons, connected him with the native population of Peloponnesus. He built a new capital of Messenia, Stenyclaros, and transferred thither, from Pylos, the seat of government; he proposed, moreover, says Pausanias, to divide Messenia into five states, and to confer on the native Messenians equal privileges with their Dorian conquerors. The Dorians complained that his administration unduly favoured the vanquished people; his chief magnates, headed by Polyphontes, himself a descendant of Hercules, formed a cabal against him, and he was slain with his two eldest sons. The youngest son of Cresphontes, Æpytus, then an infant, was saved by his mother, who sent him to her father, Cypselus, the king of Arcadia, under whose protection he was brought up.

The drama begins at the moment when Æpytus, grown to manhood, returns secretly to Messenia to take vengeance on his father's murderers. At this period Temenus was no longer reigning at Argos; he had been murdered by his sons, jealous of their brother-in-law, Deiphontes. The sons of Aristodemus, Procles and Eurysthenes, at variance with their uncle and ex-guardian, Theras, were reigning at Sparta.

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## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

LAIAS, *uncle of ÆPYTUS, brother of MEROPE.*

ÆPYTUS, *son of MEROPE and CRESPHONTES.*

POLYPHONTES, *king of MESSE니아.*

MEROPE, *widow of CRESPHONTES, the murdered king of MESSE니아.*

THE CHORUS, *of MESSEinian maidens.*

ARCAS, *an old man of MEROPE'S household.*

MESSENGER.

GUARDS, ATTENDANTS, etc.

*The Scene is before the royal palace in STENYCLAROS, the capital of MESSE니아. In the foreground is the tomb of CRESPHONTES. The action commences at day-break.*

## MEROPE

LAIAS. ÆPYTUS

### *Laias*

SON of Cresphontes, we have reach'd the goal  
Of our night-journey, and thou see'st thy home.  
Behold thy heritage, thy father's realm !  
This is that fruitful, famed Messenian land,  
Wealthy in corn and flocks, which, when at last  
The late-relenting Gods with victory brought  
The Heracleidæ back to Pelops' isle,  
Fell to thy father's lot, the second prize.  
Before thy feet this recent city spreads  
Of Stenyclaros, which he built, and made  
Of his fresh-conquer'd realm the royal seat,  
Degrading Pylos from its ancient rule.  
There stands the temple of thine ancestor,  
Great Heracles ; and, in that public place,  
Zeus hath his altar, where thy father fell.  
Southward and west, behold those snowy peaks,  
Taygetus, Laconia's border-wall ;  
And, on this side, those confluent streams which make  
Pamissus watering the Messenian plain ;  
Then to the north, Lycæus and the hills

Of pastoral Arcadia, where, a babe  
 Snatch'd from the slaughter of thy father's house,  
 Thy mother's kin received thee, and rear'd up.—  
 Our journey is well made, the work remains  
 Which to perform we made it ; means for that  
 Let us consult, before this palace sends  
 Its inmates on their daily tasks abroad.  
 Haste and advise, for day comes on apace.

*Æpytus*

O brother of my mother, guardian true,  
 And second father from that hour when first  
 My mother's faithful servant laid me down,  
 An infant, at the hearth of Cypselus,  
 My grandfather, the good Arcadian king—  
 Thy part it were to advise, and mine to obey.  
 But let us keep that purpose, which, at home,  
 We judged the best ; chance finds no better way.  
 Go thou into the city, and seek out  
 Whate'er in the Messenian people stirs  
 Of faithful fondness for their former king  
 Or hatred to their present ; in this last  
 Will lie, my grandsire said, our fairest chance.  
 For tyrants make man good beyond himself ;  
 Hate to their rule, which else would die away,  
 Their daily-practised chafings keep alive.  
 Seek this ! revive, unite it, give it hope ;  
 Bid it rise boldly at the signal given.  
 Meanwhile within my father's palace I,  
 An unknown guest, will enter, bringing word  
 Of my own death—but, Laias, well I hope  
 Through that pretended death to live and reign.

[THE CHORUS *comes forth.*



Softly, stand back !—see, to these palace gates  
 What black procession slowly makes approach ?—  
 Sad-chanting maidens clad in mourning robes,  
 With pitchers in their hands, and fresh-pull'd flowers—  
 Doubtless, they bear them to my father's tomb.

[MEROPE *comes forth.*

And look, to meet them, that one, grief-plunged Form,  
 Severer, paler, statelier than they all,  
 A golden circlet on her queenly brow !  
 O Laias, Laias, let the heart speak here—  
 Shall I not greet her ? shall I not leap forth ?

[POLYPHONTES *comes forth, following* MEROPE.

*Laias*

Not so ! thy heart would pay its moment's speech  
 By silence ever after, for, behold !  
 The King (I know him, even through many years)  
 Follows the approaching Queen, who stops, as call'd.  
 No lingering now ! straight to the city I ;  
 Do thou, till for thine entrance to this house  
 The happy moment comes, lurk here unseen  
 Behind the shelter of thy father's tomb ;  
 Remove yet further off, if aught comes near.  
 But, here while harbouring, on its margin lay,  
 Sole offering that thou hast, locks from thy head ;  
 And fill thy leisure with an earnest prayer  
 To his avenging Shade, and to the Gods  
 Who under earth watch guilty deeds of men,  
 To guide our vengeance to a prosperous close.

[LAIAS *goes out.* POLYPHONTES, MEROPE, and THE  
 CHORUS *come forward.* *As they advance, ÆPYTUS,*  
*who at first conceals himself behind the tomb,*  
*moves off the stage.*

*Polyphontes* (To THE CHORUS)

Set down your pitchers, maidens, and fall back !  
 Suspend your melancholy rites awhile ;  
 Shortly ye shall resume them with your Queen.—

## (To MEROPE)

I sought thee, Merope ; I find thee thus,  
 As I have ever found thee ; bent to keep,  
 By sad observances and public grief,  
 A mournful feud alive, which else would die.  
 I blame thee not, I do thy heart no wrong !  
 Thy deep seclusion, thine unyielding gloom,  
 Thine attitude of cold, estranged reproach,  
 These punctual funeral honours, year by year  
 Repeated, are in thee, I well believe,  
 Courageous, faithful actions, nobly dared.  
 But, Merope, the eyes of other men  
 Read in these actions, innocent in thee,  
 Perpetual promptings to rebellious hope,  
 War-cries to faction, year by year renew'd,  
 Beacons of vengeance, not to be let die.  
 And me, believe it, wise men gravely blame,  
 And ignorant men despise me, that I stand  
 Passive, permitting thee what course thou wilt.  
 Yes, the crowd mutters that remorseful fear  
 And paralysing conscience stop my arm,  
 When it should pluck thee from thy hostile way.  
 All this I bear, for, what I seek, I know :  
 Peace, peace is what I seek, and public calm ;  
 Endless extinction of unhappy hates,  
 Union cemented for this nation's weal.  
 And even now, if to behold me here,

This day, amid these rites, this black-robed train,  
 Wakens, O Queen ! remembrance in thy heart  
 Too wide at variance with the peace I seek—  
 I will not violate thy noble grief,  
 The prayer I came to urge I will defer.

*Merope*

This day, to-morrow, yesterday, alike  
 I am, I shall be, have been, in my mind  
 Tow'rd thee ; toward thy silence as thy speech.  
 Speak, therefore, or keep silence, which thou wilt.

*Polyphontes*

Hear me, then, speak ; and let this mournful day,  
 The twentieth anniversary of strife,  
 Henceforth be honour'd as the date of peace.  
 Yes, twenty years ago this day beheld  
 The king Cresphontes, thy great husband, fall ;  
 It needs no yearly offerings at his tomb  
 To keep alive that memory in my heart—  
 It lives, and, while I see the light, will live.  
 For we were kinsmen—more than kinsmen—friends ;  
 Together we had grown, together lived ;  
 Together to this isle of Pelops came  
 To take the inheritance of Heracles,  
 Together won this fair Messenian land—  
 Alas, that, how to rule it, was our broil !  
 He had his counsel, party, friends—I mine ;  
 He stood by what he wish'd for—I the same ;  
 I smote him, when our wishes clash'd in arms—  
 He had smit me, had he been swift as I.  
 But while I smote him, Queen, I honour'd him ;

Me, too, had he prevail'd, he had not scorn'd.  
Enough of this ! Since that, I have maintain'd  
The sceptre—not remissly let it fall—  
And I am seated on a prosperous throne ;  
Yet still, for I conceal it not, ferments  
In the Messenian people what remains  
Of thy dead husband's faction—vigorous once,  
Now crush'd but not quite lifeless by his fall.  
And these men look to thee, and from thy grief—  
Something too studiously, forgive me, shown—  
Infer thee their accomplice ; and they say  
That thou in secret nurtur'st up thy son,  
Him whom thou hiddest when thy husband fell,  
To avenge that fall, and bring them back to power.  
Such are their hopes—I ask not if by thee  
Willingly fed or no—their most vain hopes ;  
For I have kept conspiracy fast-chain'd  
Till now, and I have strength to chain it still.  
But, Merope, the years advance ;—I stand  
Upon the threshold of old age, alone,  
Always in arms, always in face of foes.  
The long repressive attitude of rule  
Leaves me austerer, sterner, than I would ;  
Old age is more suspicious than the free  
And valiant heart of youth, or manhood's firm  
Unclouded reason ; I would not decline  
Into a jealous tyrant, scourged with fears,  
Closing in blood and gloom his sullen reign.  
The cares which might in me with time, I feel,  
Beget a cruel temper, help me quell !  
The breach between our parties help me close !  
Assist me to rule mildly ; let us join  
Our hands in solemn union, making friends

Our factions with the friendship of their chiefs.  
 Let us in marriage, King and Queen, unite  
 Claims ever hostile else, and set thy son—  
 No more an exile fed on empty hopes,  
 And to an unsubstantial title heir,  
 But prince adopted by the will of power,  
 And future king—before this people's eyes.  
 Consider him ! consider not old hates !  
 Consider, too, this people, who were dear  
 To their dead king, thy husband—yea, too dear,  
 For that destroy'd him. Give them peace ! thou can'st.  
 O Merope, how many noble thoughts,  
 How many precious feelings of man's heart,  
 How many loves, how many gritudes,  
 Do twenty years wear out, and see expire !  
 Shall they not wear one hatred out as well ?

*Merope*

Thou hast forgot, then, who I am who hear,  
 And who thou art who speakest to me ? I  
 Am Merope, thy murder'd master's wife ;  
 And thou art Polyphontes, first his friend,  
 And then . . . his murderer. These offending tears  
 That murder moves ; this breach that thou would'st close  
 Was by that murder open'd ; that one child  
 (If still, indeed, he lives) whom thou would'st seat  
 Upon a throne not thine to give, is heir.  
 Because thou slew'st his brothers with their father.  
 Who can patch union here ? What can there be  
 But everlasting horror 'twixt us two,  
 Gulfs of estranging blood ? Across that chasm  
 Who can extend their hands ? . . . Maidens, take back  
 These offerings home ! our rites are spoil'd to-day.

*Polyphontes*

Not so ; let these Messenian maidens mark  
 The fear'd and blacken'd ruler of their race,  
 Albeit with lips unapt to self-excuse,  
 Blow off the spot of murder from his name.—  
 Murder !—but what *is* murder ? When a wretch  
 For private gain or hatred takes a life,  
 We call it murder, crush him, brand his name.  
 But when, for some great public cause, an arm  
 Is, without love or hate, austere raised  
 Against a power exempt from common checks,  
 Dangerous to all, to be but thus annull'd—  
 Ranks any man with murder such an act ?  
 With grievous deeds, perhaps ; with murder, no !  
 Find then such cause, the charge of murder falls—  
 Be judge thyself if it abound not here.  
 All know how weak the eagle, Heracles,  
 Soaring from his death-pile on Cæta, left  
 His puny, callow eaglets ; and what trials—  
 Infirm protectors, dubious oracles  
 Construed awry, misplann'd invasions—wore  
 Three generations of his offspring out ;  
 Hardly the fourth, with grievous loss, regain'd  
 Their fathers' realm, this isle, from Pelops named.  
 Who made that triumph, though deferr'd, secure ?  
 Who, but the kinsmen of the royal brood  
 Of Heracles, scarce Heracleidæ less  
 Than they ? these, and the Dorian lords, whose king  
 Ægimius gave our outcast house a home  
 When Thebes, when Athens dared not ; who in arms  
 Thrice issued with us from their pastoral vales,  
 And shed their blood like water in our cause ?

Such were the dispossessors ; of what stamp  
Were they we dispossessed ?—of us I speak,  
Who to Messenia with thy husband came ;  
I speak not now of Argos, where his brother,  
Not now of Sparta, where his nephews reign'd.—  
What we found here were tribes of fame obscure,  
Much turbulence, and little constancy,  
Precariously ruled by foreign lords  
From the Æolian stock of Neleus sprung,  
A house once great, now dwindling in its sons.  
Such were the conquer'd, such the conquerors ; who  
Had most thy husband's confidence ? Consult  
His acts ! the wife he chose was—full of virtues—  
But an Arcadian princess, more akin  
To his new subjects than to us ; his friends  
Were the Messenian chiefs ; the laws he framed  
Were aim'd at their promotion, our decline.  
And, finally, this land, then half-subdued,  
Which from one central city's guarded seat  
As from a fastness in the rocks our scant  
Handful of Dorian conquerors might have curb'd,  
He parcell'd out in five confederate states,  
Sowing his victors thinly through them all,  
Mere prisoners, meant or not, among our foes.  
If this was fear of them, it shamed the king ;  
If jealousy of us, it shamed the man.  
Long we refrain'd ourselves, submitted long,  
Construed his acts indulgently, revered,  
Though found perverse, the blood of Heracles ;  
Reluctantly the rest—but, against all,  
One voice preach'd patience, and that voice was mine !  
At last it reach'd us, that he, still mistrustful,  
Deeming, as tyrants deem, our silence hate,

Unadulating grief conspiracy,  
 Had to this city, Stenyclaros, call'd  
 A general assemblage of the realm,  
 With compact in that concourse to deliver,  
 For death, his ancient to his new-made friends.  
 Patience was thenceforth self destruction. I,  
 I his chief kinsman, I his pioneer  
 And champion to the throne, I honouring most  
 Of men the line of Heracles, preferr'd  
 The many of that lineage to the one ;  
 What his foes dared not, I, his lover, dared ;  
 I at that altar, where mid shouting crowds  
 He sacrificed, our ruin in his heart,  
 To Zeus, before he struck his blow, struck mine—  
 Struck once, and awed his mob, and saved this realm.  
 Murder let others call this, if they will ;  
 I, self-defence and righteous execution.

*Merope*

Alas, how fair a colour can his tongue,  
 Who self-exculpates, lend to foulest deeds !  
 Thy trusting lord didst thou, his servant, slay ;  
 Kinsman, thou slew'st thy kinsman ; friend, thy friend—  
 'This were enough ; but let me tell thee, too,  
 'Thou hadst no cause, as feign'd, in his misrule.  
 For ask at Argos, asked in Lacedæmon,  
 Whose people, when the Heracleidæ came,  
 Were hunted out, and to Achaia fled,  
 Whether is better, to abide alone,  
 A wolfish band, in a dispeopled realm,  
 Or conquerors with conquer'd to unite  
 Into one puissant folk, as he design'd ?  
 'These sturdy and unworn Messenian tribes,



Who shook the fierce Neleidæ on their throne,  
Who to the invading Dorians stretch'd a hand,  
And half bestow'd, half yielded up their soil—  
He would not let his savage chiefs alight,  
A cloud of vultures, on this vigorous race,  
Ravin a little while in spoil and blood,  
Then, gorged and helpless, be assail'd and slain.  
He would have saved you from your furious selves.  
Not in abhorr'd estrangement let you stand ;  
He would have mix'd you with your friendly foes,  
Foes dazzled with your prowess, well inclined  
'To reverence your lineage, more, to obey ;  
So would have built you, in a few short years,  
A just, therefore a safe, supremacy.  
For well he knew, what you, his chiefs, did not—  
How of all human rules the over-tense  
Are apt to snap ; the easy-stretch'd endure  
O gentle wisdom, little understood !  
O arts above the vulgar tyrant's reach !  
O policy too subtle far for sense  
Of heady, masterful, injurious men !  
This good he meant you, and for this he died !  
Yet not for this—else might thy crime in part  
Be error deem'd—but that pretence is vain.  
For, if ye slew him for supposed misrule,  
Injustice to his kin and Dorian friends,  
Why with the offending father did ye slay  
Two unoffending babes, his innocent sons ?  
Why not on them have placed the forfeit crown,  
Ruled in their name, and train'd them to your will ?  
Had *they* misruled ? had *they* forgot their friends,  
Forsworn their blood ? ungratefully had *they*  
Preferr'd Messenian serfs to Dorian lords ?

No! but to thy ambition their poor lives  
 Were bar—and this, too, was their father's crime.  
 That thou might'st reign he died, not for his fault  
 Even fancied; and his death thou wroughtest chief!  
 For, if the other lords desired his fall  
 Hotlier than thou, and were by thee kept back,  
 Why dost thou only profit by his death?  
 Thy crown condemns thee, while thy tongue absolves.  
 And now to me thou tenderest friendly league,  
 And to my son reversion to thy throne!  
 Short answer is sufficient; league with thee,  
 For me I deem such impious; and for him  
 Exile abroad more safe than heirship here.

*Polyphontes*

I ask thee not to approve thy husband's death,  
 No, nor expect thee to admit the grounds,  
 In reason good, which justified my deed.  
 With women the heart argues, not the mind.  
 But, for thy children's death, I stand assoil'd—  
 I saved them, meant them honour; but thy friends  
 Rose, and with fire and sword assailed my house  
 By night; in that blind tumult they were slain.  
 To chance impute their deaths, then, not to me.

*Merope*

Such chance as kill'd the father, kill'd the sons.

*Polyphontes*

One son at least I spared, for still he lives.

*Merope*

Tyrants think him they murder not they spare.

*Polyphontes*

Not much a tyrant thy free speech displays me.

*Merope*

Thy shame secures my freedom, not thy will.

*Polyphontes*

Shame rarely checks the genuine tyrant's will.

*Merope*

One merit, then, thou hast ; exult in that.

*Polyphontes*

Thou standest out, I see, repellst peace.

*Merope*

Thy sword repell'd it long ago, not I.

*Polyphontes*

Doubtless thou reckonest on the help of friends.

*Merope*

Not help of men, although, perhaps, of Gods.

*Polyphontes*

What Gods ? the Gods of concord, civil weal ?

*Merope*

No ! the avenging Gods, who punish crime.

*Polyphontes*

Beware! from thee upbraidings I receive  
 With pity, nay, with reverence; yet, beware!  
 I know, I know how hard it is to think  
 That right, that conscience pointed to a deed,  
 Where interest seems to have enjoin'd it too.  
 Most men are led by interest; and the few  
 Who are not, expiate the general sin,  
 Involved in one suspicion with the base.  
 Dizzy the path and perilous the way  
 Which in a deed like mine a just man treads,  
 But it is sometimes trodden, oh! believe it.  
 Yet how *canst* thou believe it? therefore thou  
 Hast all impunity. Yet, lest thy friends,  
 Embolden'd by my lenience, think it fear,  
 And count on like impunity, and rise,  
 And have to thank thee for a fall, beware!  
 To rule this kingdom I intend; with sway  
 Clement, if may be, but to rule it—there  
 Expect no wavering, no retreat, no change.  
 And now I leave thee to these rites, esteem'd  
 Pious, but impious, surely, if their scope  
 Be to foment old memories of wrath.  
 Pray, as thou pour'st libations on this tomb,  
 To be deliver'd from thy foster'd hate,  
 Unjust suspicion, and erroneous fear.

[POLYPHONTES *goes into the palace.* THE CHORUS  
*and MEROPE approach the tomb with their  
 offerings.*

*The Chorus*

Draw, draw near to the tomb!

*strophe.*

Lay honey-cakes on its marge,  
 Pour the libation of milk,  
 Deck it with garlands of flowers.  
 Tears fall thickly the while !  
 Behold, O King from the dark  
 House of the grave, what we do !

O Arcadian hills,  
 Send us the Youth whom ye hide,  
 Girt with his coat for the chase,  
 With the low broad hat of the tann'd  
 Hunter o'ershadowing his brow ;  
 Grasping firm, in his hand  
 Advanced, two javelins, not now  
 Dangerous alone to the deer !

*antistrophe.*

*Merope*

What shall I bear, O lost  
 Husband and King, to thy grave?—  
 Pure libations, and fresh  
 Flowers? But thou, in the gloom,  
 Discontented, perhaps,  
 Demandest vengeance, not grief?  
 Sternly requirest a man,  
 Light to spring up to thy house?

*str. 1.*

*The Chorus*

Vengeance, O Queen, is his due,  
 His most just prayer ; yet his house—  
 If that might soothe him below—  
 Prosperous, mighty, came back  
 In the third generation, the way  
 Order'd by Fate, to their home ;

*str. 2.*

And now, glorious, secure,  
 Fill the wealth-giving thrones  
 Of their heritage, Pelops' isle.

*Merope*

Suffering sent them, Death  
 March'd with them, Hatred and Strife  
 Met them entering their halls.  
 For from the day when the first  
 Heracleidæ received  
 That Delphic hest to return,  
 What hath involved them, but blind  
 Error on error, and blood?

*ant.* 1.

*The Chorus*

Truly I hear of a Maid  
 Of that stock born, who bestow'd  
 Her blood that so she might make  
 Victory sure to her race,  
 When the fight hung in doubt! but she now,  
 Honour'd and sung of by all,  
 Far on Marathon plain,  
 Gives her name to the spring  
 Macaria, blessed Child.

*ant.* 2.

*Merope*

She led the way of death.  
 And the plain of Tegea,  
 And the grave of Orestes—  
 Where, in secret seclusion  
 Of his unreveal'd tomb,  
 Sleeps Agamemnon's unhappy,

*str.* 3.

Matricidal, world-famed,  
 Seven-cubit-statured son—  
 Sent forth Echemus, the victor, the king,  
 By whose hand, at the Isthmus,  
 At the fate-denied straits,  
 Fell the eldest of the sons of Heracles,  
 Hyllus, the chief of his house.  
 Brother follow'd sister  
 The all-wept way.

*The Chorus*

Yes ; but his seed still, wiser-counsell'd,  
 Sail'd by the fate-meant Gulf to their conquest --  
 Slew their enemies' king, Tisamenus.  
 Wherefore accept that happier omen !  
 Yet shall restorer appear to the race.

*Merope*

Three brothers won the field,  
 And to two did Destiny  
 Give the thrones that they conquer'd.  
 But the third, what delays him  
 From his unattain'd crown ? . . .  
 Ah Pylades and Electra,  
 Ever faithful, untired,  
 Jealous, blood-exacting friends !  
 Your sons leap upon the foe of your kin,  
 In the passes of Delphi,  
 In the temple-built gorge !  
 There the youngest of the band of conquerors  
 Perish'd, in sight of the goal.  
 Thrice son follow'd sire  
 The all-wept way.

*ant.* 3

*The Chorus*

Thou tellest the fate of the last *str.* 4.  
 Of the three Heracleidæ.  
 Not of him, of Cresphontes thou shared'st the lot !  
 A king, a king was he while he lived,  
 Swaying the sceptre with predestined hand :  
 And now, minister loved,  
 Holds rule.

*Merope*

Ah me . . . Ah . . .

*The Chorus*

For the awful Monarchs below.

*Merope*

Thou touchest the worst of my ills. *str.* 5.  
 Oh had he fallen of old  
 At the Isthmus, in fight with his foes,  
 By Achaian, Arcadian spear !  
 Then had his sepulchre risen  
 On the high sea-bank, in the sight  
 Of either Gulf, and remain'd  
 All-regarded afar,  
 Noble memorial of worth  
 Of a valiant Chief, to his own.

*The Chorus*

There rose up a cry in the streets *ant.* 4.  
 From the terrified people.  
 From the altar of Zeus, from the crowd, came a wail.



A blow, a blow was struck, and he fell,  
 Sullyng his garment with dark-streaming blood ;  
 While stood o'er him a Form—  
 Some Form

*Merope*

Ah me . . . Ah . . .

*The Chorus*

Of a dreadful Presence of fear.

*Merope*

More piercing the second cry rang,  
 Wail'd from the palace within,  
 From the Children. . . . The Fury to them,  
 Fresh from their father, draws near.  
 Ah bloody axe ! dizzy blows !  
 In these ears, they thunder, they ring,  
 These poor ears, still ! and these eyes  
 Night and day see them fall,  
 Fiery phantoms of death,  
 On the fair, curl'd heads of my sons.

*ant.* 5.

*The Chorus*

Not to thee only hath come  
 Sorrow, O Queen, of mankind.  
 Had not Electra to haunt  
 A palace defiled by a death unavenged,  
 For years, in silence, devouring her heart ?  
 But her nursling, her hope, came at last.  
 Thou, too, rearest in hope,  
 Far 'mid Arcadian hills,

*str.* 6.

Somewhere, for vengeance, a champion, a light.  
 Soon, soon shall Zeus bring him home!  
 Soon shall he dawn on this land!

*Merope*

Him in secret, in tears,  
 Month after month, I await  
 Vainly. For he, in the glens  
 Of Lycæus afar,  
 A gladsome hunter of deer,  
 Basks in his morning of youth,  
 Spares not a thought to his home.

*str.* 7.

*The Chorus*

Give not thy heart to despair.  
 No lamentation can loose  
 Prisoners of death from the grave;  
 But Zeus, who accounteth thy quarrel his own,  
 Still rules, still watches, and numb'reth the hours  
 Till the sinner, the vengeance, be ripe.  
 Still, by Acheron stream,  
 Terrible Deities throned  
 Sit, and eye grimly the victim unscourged.  
 Still, still the Dorian boy,  
 Exiled, remembers his home.

*ant.* 6.

*Merope*

Him if high-ruling Zeus  
 Bring to me safe, let the rest  
 Go as it will! But if this  
 Clash with justice, the Gods  
 Forgive my folly, and work

*ant.* 7.

Vengeance on sinner and sin—  
Only to me give my child!

*The Chorus*

Hear us and help us, Shade of our King! *str.* 8.

*Merope*

A return, O Father! give to thy boy! *str.* 9.

*The Chorus*

Send an avenger, Gods of the dead! *ant.* 8.

*Merope*

An avenger I ask not—send me my son! *ant.* 9.

*The Chorus*

O Queen, for an avenger to appear,  
Thinking that so I pray'd aright, I pray'd;  
If I pray'd wrongly, I revoke the prayer.

*Merope*

Forgive me, maidens, if I seem too slack  
In calling vengeance on a murderer's head.  
Impious I deem the alliance which he asks,  
Requite him words severe for seeming kind,  
And righteous, if he falls, I count his fall.  
With this, to those unbribed inquisitors  
Who in man's inmost bosom sit and judge,  
The true avengers these, I leave his deed,  
By him shown fair, but, I believe, most foul.  
If these condemn him, let them pass his doom!

That doom obtain effect, from Gods or men !  
 So be it ; yet will that more solace bring  
 To the chafed heart of Justice than to mine.  
 To hear another tumult in these streets,  
 To have another murder in these halls,  
 To see another mighty victim bleed—  
 Small comfort offers for a woman there !  
 A woman, O my friends, has one desire :  
 To see secure, to live with, those she loves.  
 Can vengeance give me back the murdered ? no !  
 Can it bring home my child ? Ah, if it can,  
 I pray the Furies' ever-restless band,  
 And pray the Gods, and pray the all-seeing sun :  
 "Sun, who careerest through the height of Heaven,  
 When o'er the Arcadian forests thou art come,  
 And see'st my stripling hunter there afield,  
 Put tightness in thy gold-embossed rein,  
 And check thy fiery steeds, and, leaning back,  
 Throw him a pealing word of summons down,  
 To come, a late avenger, to the aid  
 Of this poor soul who bare him, and his sire."  
 If this will bring him back, be this my prayer !  
 But Vengeance travels in a dangerous way,  
 Double of issue, full of pits and snares  
 For all who pass, pursuers and pursued—  
 That way is dubious for a mother's prayer.  
 Rather on thee I call, Husband beloved—  
 May Hermes, herald of the dead, convey  
 My words below to thee, and make thee hear—  
 Bring back our son ! if may be, without blood !  
 Install him in thy throne, still without blood !  
 Grant him to reign there wise and just like thee,  
 More fortunate than thee, more fairly judged !

This for our son ; and for myself I pray,  
 Soon, having once beheld him, to descend  
 Into the quiet gloom, where thou art now.  
 These words to thine indulgent ear, thy wife,  
 I send, and these libations pour the while.

[*They make their offerings at the tomb.* MEROPE  
*then turns to go towards the palace.*

*The Chorus*

The dead hath now his offerings duly paid.  
 But whither go'st thou hence, O Queen, away?

*Merope*

To receive Arcas, who to-day should come,  
 Bringing me of my boy the annual news.

*The Chorus*

No certain news if like the rest it run.

*Merope*

Certain in this, that 'tis uncertain still.

*The Chorus*

What keeps him in Arcadia from return?

*Merope*

His grandsire and his uncles fear the risk.

*The Chorus*

Of what? it lies with them to make risk none.

*Merope*

Discovery of a visit made by stealth.

*The Chorus*

With arms then they should send him, not by stealth.

*Merope*

With arms they dare not, and by stealth they fear.

*The Chorus*

I doubt their caution little suits their ward.

*Merope*

The heart of youth I know ; that most I fear.

*The Chorus*

I augur thou wilt hear some bold resolve.

*Merope*

I dare not wish it ; but, at least, to hear  
 That my son still survives, in health, in bloom ;  
 To hear that still he loves, still longs for, me,  
 Yet, with a light uncareworn spirit, turns  
 Quick from distressful thought, and floats in joy—  
 Thus much from Arcas, my old servant true,  
 Who saved him from these murderous halls a babe,  
 And since has fondly watch'd him night and day  
 Save for this annual charge, I hope to hear.  
 If this be all, I know not ; but I know,  
 These many years I live for this alone.

[MEROPE goes in.]

*The Chorus*

Much is there which the sea *str. 1.*  
 Conceals from man, who cannot plumb its depths.  
 Air to his unwing'd form denies a way,  
 And keeps its liquid solitudes unscaled.  
 Even earth, whereon he treads,  
 So feeble is his march, so slow,  
 Holds countless tracts untrod.

But more than all unplumb'd, *ant. 1.*  
 Unscaled, untrodden, is the heart of man.  
 More than all secrets hid, the way it keeps.  
 Nor any of our organs so obtuse,  
 Inaccurate, and frail,  
 As those wherewith we try to test  
 Feelings and motives there.

Yea, and not only have we not explored *str. 2*  
 That wide and various world, the heart of others,  
 But even our own heart, that narrow world  
 Bounded in our own breast, we hardly know,  
 Of our own actions dimly trace the causes.  
 Whether a natural obscureness, hiding  
 That region in perpetual cloud,  
 Or our own want of effort, be the bar.

Therefore—while acts are from their motives  
     judged, *ant. 2.*  
 And to one act many most unlike motives,  
 This pure, that guilty, may have each impell'd—  
 Power fails us to try clearly if that cause  
 Assign'd us by the actor be the true one ;  
 Power fails the man himself to fix distinctly

The cause which drew him to his deed,  
And stamp himself, thereafter, bad or good.

*The most are bad*, wise men have said.

*str.* 3.

*Let the best rule*, they say again.

The best, then, to dominion hath the right.

Rights unconceded and denied,

Surely, if rights, may be by force asserted—

May be, nay should, if for the general weal.

The best, then, to the throne may carve his way,

And strike opposers down,

Free from all guilt of lawlessness,

Or selfish lust of personal power ;

Bent only to serve virtue,

Bent to diminish wrong.

And truly, in this ill-ruled world,

*ant.* 3.

Well sometimes may the good desire

To give to virtue her dominion due !

Well may he long to interrupt

The reign of folly, usurpation ever,

Though fenced by sanction of a thousand years !

Well thirst to drag the wrongful ruler down ;

Well purpose to pen back

Into the narrow path of right

The ignorant, headlong multitude,

Who blindly follow, ever,

Blind leaders, to their bane !

But who can say, without a fear :

*str.* 4.

*That best, who ought to rule, am I ;*

*The mob, who ought to obey, are these ;*

*I the one righteous, they the many bad ?*

Who, without check of conscience, can aver



That he to power makes way by arms,  
 Sheds blood, imprisons, banishes, attaints,  
 Commits all deeds the guilty oftenest do,  
 Without a single guilty thought,  
 Arm'd for right only, and the general good ?

Therefore, with censure unallay'd,  
 Therefore, with unexcepting ban,  
 Zeus and pure-thoughted Justice brand  
 Imperious self-asserting violence ;  
 Sternly condemn the too bold man, who dares  
 Elect himself Heaven's destined arm ;  
 And, knowing well man's inmost heart infirm,  
 However noble the committer be,  
 His grounds however specious shown,  
 Turn with averted eyes from deeds of blood.

*ant.* 4

Thus, though a woman, I was school'd  
 By those whom I revere.  
 Whether I learnt their lessons well,  
 Or, having learnt them, well apply  
 To what hath in this house befall'n,  
 If in the event be any proof,  
 The event will quickly show.

*epode.*[ÆPYTUS *comes in.**Æpytus*

Maidens, assure me if they told me true  
 Who told me that the royal house was here.

*The Chorus*

Rightly they told thee, and thou art arrived.

*Æpytus*

Here, then, it is, where Polyphontes dwells?

*The Chorus*

He doth; thou hast both house and master right.

*Æpytus*

Might some one straight inform him he is sought?

*The Chorus*

Inform him that thyself, for here he comes.

[POLYPHONTES *comes forth, with ATTENDANTS and*  
GUARDS.

*Æpytus*

O King, all hail! I come with weighty news;  
Most likely, grateful; but, in all case, sure.

*Polyphontes*

Speak them, that I may judge their kind myself.

*Æpytus*

Accept them in one word, for good or bad:  
Æpytus, the Messenian prince, is dead!

*Polyphontes*

Dead!—and when died he? where? and by what hand?  
And who art thou, who bringest me such news?

*Æpytus*

He perish'd in Arcadia, where he dwelt  
 With Cypselus ; and two days since he died.  
 One of the train of Cypselus am I.

*Polyphontes*

Instruct me of the manner of his death.

*Æpytus*

That will I do, and to this end I came.  
 For, being of like age, of birth not mean,  
 The son of an Arcadian noble, I  
 Was chosen his companion from a boy ;  
 And on the hunting-rambles which his heart,  
 Unquiet, drove him ever to pursue  
 Through all the lordships of the Arcadian dales,  
 From chief to chief, I wander'd at his side,  
 The captain of his squires, and his guard.  
 On such a hunting-journey, three morns since,  
 With beaters, hounds, and huntsmen, he and I  
 Set forth from Tegea, the royal town.  
 The prince at start seem'd sad, but his regard  
 Clear'd with blithe travel and the morning air.  
 We rode from Tegea, through the woods of oaks,  
 Past Arnê spring, where Rhea gave the babe  
 Poseidon to the shepherd-boys to hide  
 From Saturn's search among the new-yea'n'd lambs,  
 To Mantinea, with its unbaked walls ;  
 Thence, by the Sea-God's Sanctuary and the tomb  
 Whither from wintry Mænalus were brought  
 The bones of Arcas, whence our race is named,

On, to the marshy Orchomenian plain,  
And the Stone Coffins ;—then, by Caphyæ Cliffs,  
To Pheneos with its craggy citadel.  
There, with the chief of that hill-town, we lodged  
One night ; and the next day at dawn fared on  
By the Three Fountains and the Adder's Hill  
To the Stymphalian Lake, our journey's end,  
To draw the coverts on Cyllenê's side.  
There, on a high green spur which bathes its point  
Far in the liquid lake, we sate, and drew  
Cates from our hunters' pouch, Arcadian fare,  
Sweet chestnuts, barley-cakes, and boar's-flesh dried ;  
And as we ate, and rested there, we talk'd  
Of places we had pass'd, sport we had had,  
Of beasts of chase that haunt the Arcadian hills,  
Wild hog, and bear, and mountain-deer, and roe ;  
Last, of our quarters with the Arcadian chiefs.  
For courteous entertainment, welcome warm,  
Sad, reverential homage, had our prince  
From all, for his great lineage and his woes ;  
All which he own'd, and praised with grateful mind.  
But still over his speech a gloom there hung,  
As of one shadow'd by impending death ;  
And strangely, as we talk'd, he would apply  
The story of spots mention'd to his own ;  
Telling us, Arnê minded him, he too  
Was saved a babe, but to a life obscure,  
Which he, the seed of Heracles, dragg'd on  
Inglorious, and should drop at last unknown,  
Even as those dead unepitaph'd, who lie  
In the stone coffins at Orchomenus.  
And, then, he bade remember how we pass'd  
The Mantineän Sanctuary, forbid

To foot of mortal, where his ancestor,  
Named Æpytus like him, having gone in,  
Was blinded by the outgushing springs of brine.  
Then, turning westward to the Adder's Hill—  
*Another ancestor, named, too, like me,  
Died of a snake-bite, said he, on that brow ;  
Still at his mountain-tomb men marvel, built  
Where, as life ebb'd, his bearers laid him down.*  
So he play'd on ; then ended, with a smile :  
*This region is not happy for my race.*  
We cheer'd him ; but, that moment, from the copse  
By the lake-edge, broke the sharp cry of hounds ;  
The prickers shouted that the stag was gone.  
We sprang upon our feet, we snatch'd our spears,  
We bounded down the swarded slope, we plunged  
Through the dense ilex-thickets to the dogs.  
Far in the woods ahead their music rang ;  
And many times that morn we coursed in ring  
The forests round that belt Cyllenê's side ;  
Till I, thrown out and tired, came to halt  
On that same spur where we had sate at morn.  
And resting there to breathe, I watch'd the chase—  
Rare, straggling hunters, foil'd by brake and crag,  
And the prince, single, pressing on the rear  
Of that unflagging quarry and the hounds.  
Now in the woods far down I saw them cross  
An open glade ; now he was high aloft  
On some tall scar fringed with dark feathery pines,  
Peering to spy a goat-track down the cliff,  
Cheering with hand, and voice, and horn his dogs.  
At last the cry drew to the water's edge—  
And through the brushwood, to the pebbly strand,  
Broke, black with sweat, the antler'd mountain-stag,

And took the lake. Two hounds alone pursued,  
Then came the prince ; he shouted and plunged in.  
—There is a chasm rifted in the base  
Of that unfooted precipice, whose rock  
Walls on one side the deep Stympthalian Lake ;  
There the lake-waters, which in ages gone  
Wash'd, as the marks upon the hills still show,  
All the Stympthalian plain, are now suck'd down.  
A headland, with one aged plane-tree crown'd,  
Parts from this cave-pierced cliff the shelving bay  
Where first the chase plunged in ; the bay is smooth,  
But round the headland's point a current sets,  
Strong, black, tempestuous, to the cavern-mouth.  
Stoutly, under the headland's lee, they swam ;  
But when they came abreast the point, the race  
Caught them as wind takes feathers, whirl'd them round  
Struggling in vain to cross it, swept them on,  
Stag, dogs, and hunter, to the yawning gulph.  
All this, O King, not piecemeal, as to thee  
Now told, but in one flashing instant pass'd.  
While from the turf whereon I lay I sprang  
And took three strides, quarry and dogs were gone ;  
A moment more—I saw the prince turn round  
Once in the black and arrowy race, and cast  
An arm aloft for help ; then sweep beneath  
The low-brow'd cavern-arch, and disappear.  
And what I could, I did—to call by cries  
Some straggling hunters to my aid, to rouse  
Fishers who live on the lake-side, to launch  
Boats, and approach, near as we dared, the chasm.  
But of the prince nothing remain'd, save this,  
His boar-spear's broken shaft, back on the lake  
Cast by the rumbling subterranean stream ;

And this, at landing spied by us and saved,  
 His broad-brimm'd hunter's hat, which, in the bay,  
 Where first the stag took water, floated still.  
 And I across the mountains brought with haste  
 To Cypselus, at Basilis, this news—  
 Basilis, his new city, which he now  
 Near Lycosura builds, Lycaon's town,  
 First city founded on the earth by men.  
 He to thee sends me on, in one thing glad,  
 While all else grieves him, that his grandchild's death  
 Extinguishes distrust 'twixt him and thee.  
 But I from our deplored mischance learn this :  
 The man who to untimely death is doom'd,  
 Vainly you hedge him from the assault of harm ;  
 He bears the seed of ruin in himself.

*The Chorus.*

So dies the last shoot of our royal tree !  
 Who shall tell Merope this heavy news ?

*Polyphontes*

Stranger, this news thou bringest is too great  
 For instant comment, having many sides  
 Of import, and in silence best received,  
 Whether it turn at last to joy or woe.  
 But thou, the zealous bearer, hast no part  
 In what it hath of painful, whether now,  
 First heard, or in its future issue shown.  
 Thou for thy labour hast deserved our best  
 Refreshment, needed by thee, as I judge,  
 With mountain-travel and night-watching spent.—  
 To the guest-chamber lead him, some one ! give  
 All entertainment which a traveller needs,

And such as fits a royal house to show ;  
To friends, still more, and labourers in our cause.

[ATTENDANTS *conduct* ÆPYTUS *within the palace.*

*The Chorus*

The youth is gone within ; alas ! he bears  
A presence sad for some one through those doors.

*Polyphontes*

Admire then, maidens, how in one short hour  
The schemes, pursued in vain for twenty years,  
Are—by a stroke, though undesired, complete—  
Crown'd with success, not in my way, but Heaven's !  
This at a moment, too, when I had urged  
A last, long-cherish'd project, in my aim  
Of peace, and been repulsed with hate and scorn.  
Fair terms of reconciliation, equal rule,  
I offer'd to my foes, and they refused ;  
Worse terms than mine they have obtain'd from Heaven.  
Dire is this blow for Merope ; and I  
Wish'd, truly wish'd, solution to our broil  
Other than by this death ; but it hath come !  
I speak no word of boast, but this I say :  
A private loss here founds a nation's peace.

[POLYPHONTES *goes out.*

*The Chorus*

Peace, who tarriest too long ;  
Peace, with delight in thy train ;  
Come, come back to our prayer !  
Then shall the revel again  
Visit our streets, and the sound

*str.*



Of the harp be heard with the pipe,  
 When the flashing torches appear  
 In the marriage-train coming on,  
 With dancing maidens and boys—  
 While the matrons come to the doors,  
 And the old men rise from their bench,  
 When the youths bring home the bride.

Not condemn'd by my voice  
 He who restores thee shall be,  
 Not unfavour'd by Heaven.  
 Surely no sinner the man,  
 Dread though his acts, to whose hand  
 Such a boon to bring hath been given.  
 Let her come, fair Peace! let her come!  
 But the demons long nourish'd here,  
 Murder, Discord, and Hate,  
 In the stormy desolate waves  
 Of the Thracian Sea let her leave,  
 Or the howling outermost main!

*ant.*[MEROPE *comes forth**Merope*

A whisper through the palace flies of one  
 Arrived from Tegea with weighty news;  
 And I came, thinking to find Arcas here.  
 Ye have not left this gate, which he must pass;  
 Tell me—hath one not come? or, worse mischance,  
 Come, but been intercepted by the King?

*The Chorus*

A messenger, sent from Arcadia here,  
 Arrived, and of the King had speech but now.

*Merope*

Ah me! the wrong expectant got his news.

*The Chorus*

The message brought was for the King design'd.

*Merope*

How so? was Arcas not the messenger?

*The Chorus*

A younger man, and of a different name.

*Merope*

And what Arcadian news had he to tell?

*The Chorus*

Learn that from other lips, O Queen, than mine.

*Merope*

He kept his tale, then, for the King alone?

*The Chorus*

His tale was meeter for that ear than thine.

*Merope*

Why dost thou falter, and make half reply?

*The Chorus*

O thrice unhappy, how I groan thy fate!

*Merope*

Thou frightenest and confound'st me by thy words.  
O were but Arcas come, all would be well?

*The Chorus*

If so, all's well : for look, the old man speeds  
Up from the city tow'rd this gated hill.

[ARCAS comes in.

*Merope*

Not with the failing breath and foot of age  
My faithful follower comes. Welcome, old friend!

*Arcas*

Faithful, not welcome, when my tale is told.  
O that my over-speed and bursting grief  
Had on the journey choked my labouring breath,  
And lock'd my speech for ever in my breast!  
Yet then another man would bring this news,  
Wherewith from end to end Arcadia rings.—  
O honour'd Queen, thy son, my charge, is gone.

*The Chorus*

Too suddenly thou tellest such a loss.  
Look up, O Queen! look up, O mistress dear!  
Look up, and see thy friends who comfort thee.

*Merope*

Ah . . . Ah . . . Ah me!

*The Chorus*

And I, too, say, ah me!

*Arcas*

Forgive, forgive the bringer of such news!

*Merope*

Better from thine than from an enemy's tongue.

*The Chorus*

And yet no enemy did this, O Queen :  
But the wit-baffling will and hand of Heaven.

*Arcas*

No enemy! and what hast thou, then, heard?  
Swift as I came, hath falsehood been before?

*The Chorus*

A youth arrived but now—the son, he said,  
Of an Arcadian lord—our prince's friend—  
Jaded with travel, clad in hunter's garb.  
He brought report that his own eyes had seen  
The prince, in chase after a swimming stag,  
Swept down a chasm rifted in the cliff  
Which hangs o'er the Stymphalian Lake, and drown'd.

*Arcas*

Ah me! with what a foot doth treason post,  
While loyalty, with all her speed, is slow!  
Another tale, I trow, thy messenger  
For the King's private ear reserves, like this  
In one thing only, that the prince is dead.

*The Chorus*

And how then runs this true and private tale?

*Arcas*

As much to the King's wish, more to his shame.  
 This young Arcadian noble, guard and mate  
 To Æpytus, the king seduced with gold,  
 And had him at the prince's side in leash,  
 Ready to slip on his unconscious prey.  
 He on a hunting party two days since,  
 Among the forests on Cyllenê's side,  
 Perform'd good service for his bloody wage ;  
 Our prince, and the good Laias, whom his ward  
 Had in a father's place, he basely murder'd.  
 'Tis so, 'tis so, alas, for see the proof :  
 Uncle and nephew disappear ; their death  
 Is charged against this stripling ; agents, fee'd  
 To ply 'twixt the Messenian king and him,  
 Come forth, denounce the traffic and the traitor.  
 Seized, he escapes—and next I find him here.  
 Take this for true, the other tale for feign'd.

*The Chorus*

The youth, thou say'st, we saw and heard but now—

*Arcas*

He comes to tell his prompter he hath sped.

*The Chorus*

Still he repeats the drowning story here.

*Arcas*

To thee—that needs no Œdipus to explain.

*The Chorus*

Interpret, then ; for we, it seems, are dull.

*Arcas*

Your King desired the profit of his death,  
 Not the black credit of his murderer.  
 That stern word “*murder*” had too dread a sound  
 For the Messenian hearts, who loved the prince.

*The Chorus*

Suspicion grave I see, but no firm proof.

*Merope*

Peace ! peace ! all's clear.—The wicked watch and work  
 While the good sleep ; the workers have the day.  
 Yes ! yes ! now I conceive the liberal grace  
 Of this far-scheming tyrant, and his boon  
 Of heirship to his kingdom for my son :  
 He had his murderer ready, and the sword  
 Lifted, and that unwish'd-for heirship void—  
 A tale, meanwhile, forged for his subjects' ears—  
 And me, henceforth sole rival with himself  
 In their allegiance, me, in my son's death-hour,  
 When all turn'd tow'rds me, me he would have shown  
 To my Messenians, duped, disarm'd, despised,  
 The willing sharer of his guilty rule,  
 All claim to succour forfeit, to myself  
 Hateful, by each Messenian heart abhorr'd.  
 His offers I repell'd—but what of that ?  
 If with no rage, no fire of righteous hate,  
 Such as ere now hath spurr'd to fearful deeds

Weak women with a thousandth part my wrongs,  
But calm, but unresentful, I endured  
His offers, coldly heard them, cold repell'd?  
How must men think me abject, void of heart,  
While all this time I bear to linger on  
In this blood-deluged palace, in whose halls  
Either a vengeful Fury I should stalk,  
Or else not live at all!—but here I haunt,  
A pale, unmeaning ghost, powerless to fright  
Or harm, and nurse my longing for my son,  
A helpless one, I know it—but the Gods  
Have temper'd me e'en thus, and, in some souls,  
Misery, which rouses others, breaks the spring.  
And even now, my son, ah me! my son,  
Fain would I fade away, as I have lived,  
Without a cry, a struggle, or a blow,  
All vengeance unattempted, and descend  
To the invisible plains, to roam with thee,  
Fit denizen, the lampless under-world——  
But with what eyes should I encounter there  
My husband, wandering with his stern compeers,  
Amphiaraos, or Mycenæ's king,  
Who led the Greeks to Ilium, Agamemnon,  
Betray'd like him, but, not like him, avenged?  
Or with what voice shall I the questions meet  
Of my two elder sons, slain long ago,  
Who sadly ask me, what, if not revenge,  
Kept me, their mother, from their side so long?  
Or how reply to thee, my child last-born,  
Last-murder'd, who reproachfully wilt say :  
*Mother, I well believed thou lived'st on  
In the detested palace of thy foe,  
With patience on thy face, death in thy heart,*

*Counting, till I grew up, the laggard years,  
 That our joint hands might then together pay  
 To our unhappy house the debt we owe.  
 My death makes my debt void, and doubles thine—  
 But down thou fleest here, and leav'st our scourge  
 Triumphant, and condemnest all our race  
 To lie in gloom for ever unappeased.*

What shall I have to answer to such words?—  
 No, something must be dared ; and, great as erst  
 Our dastard patience, be our daring now !  
 Come, ye swift Furies, who to him ye haunt  
 Permit no peace till your behests are done ;  
 Come Hermes, who dost friend the unjustly kill'd,  
 And can'st teach simple ones to plot and feign ;  
 Come, lightning Passion, that with foot of fire  
 Advancest to the middle of a deed  
 Almost before 'tis plann'd ; come, glowing Hate ;  
 Come, baneful Mischief, from thy murky den  
 Under the dripping black Tartarean cliff  
 Which Styx's awful waters trickle down—  
 Inspire this coward heart, this flagging arm !  
 How say ye, maidens, do ye know these prayers ?  
 Are these words Merope's—is this voice mine ?  
 Old man, old man, thou had'st my boy in charge,  
 And he is lost, and thou hast that to atone !  
 Fly, find me on the instant where confer  
 The murderer and his impious setter-on—  
 And ye, keep faithful silence, friends, and mark  
 What one weak woman can achieve alone.

*Arcas*

O mistress, by the Gods, do nothing rash !



*Merope*

Unfaithful servant, dost thou, too, desert me?

*Arcas*

I go! I go!—The King holds council—there  
Will I seek tidings. Take, the while, this word:  
Attempting deeds beyond thy power to do,  
Thou nothing profitest thy friends, but mak'st  
Our misery more, and thine own ruin sure.

[ARCAS goes out.]

*The Chorus*

I have heard, O Queen, how a prince,  
Agamemnon's son, in Mycenæ,  
Orestes, died but in name,  
Lived for the death of his foes.

*str. I.*

*Merope*

Peace!

*The Chorus*

What is it?

*Merope*

Alas,  
Thou destroyest me!

*The Chorus*

How?

*Merope*

Whispering hope of a life  
Which no stranger unknown,

But the faithful servant and nurse,  
Whose tears warrant his truth,  
Bears sad witness is lost.

*The Chorus*

Wheresoe'er men are, there is grief.  
In a thousand countries, a thousand  
Homes, e'en now is there wail ;  
Mothers lamenting their sons.

*ant.* 1.

*Merope*

Yes——

*The Chorus*

Thou knowest it ?

*Merope*

This,

Who lives, witnesses.

*The Chorus*

True.

*Merope*

But is it only a fate  
Sure, all-common, to lose  
In a land of friends, by a friend,  
One last, murder-saved child ?

*The Chorus*

Ah me !

*str.* 2

*Merope*

Thou confessest the prize  
 In the rushing, thundering, mad,  
 Cloud-enveloped, obscure,  
 Unapplauded, unsung  
 Race of calamity, mine ?

*The Chorus*

None can truly claim that  
 Mournful preëminence, not  
 Thou.

*Merope*

Fate *gives* it, ah me !

*The Chorus*

Not, above all, in the doubts,  
 Double and clashing, that hang——

*Merope*

What then ?  
 Seems it lighter, my loss,  
 If, perhaps, unpierced by the sword,  
 My child lies in his jagg'd  
 Sunless prison of rock,  
 On the black wave borne to and fro ?

*ant. 2.*

*The Chorus*

Worse, far worse, if his friend,  
 If the Arcadian within,  
 If——

*Merope (with a start)*

How say'st thou? within? . .

*The Chorus*

He in the guest-chamber now,  
Faithlessly murder'd his friend.

*Merope*

Ye, too, ye, too, join to betray, then  
Your Queen!

*The Chorus*

What is this?

*Merope*

Ye knew,

O false friends! into what  
Haven the murderer had dropp'd?  
Ye kept silence?

*The Chorus*

In fear,

O loved mistress! in fear,  
Dreading thine over-wrought mood,  
What I knew, I conceal'd.

*Merope*

Swear by the Gods henceforth to obey me!

*The Chorus*

Unhappy one, what deed  
Purposes thy despair?  
I promise; but I fear.

*Merope*

From the altar, the unavenged tomb,  
Fetch me the sacrifice-axe !——

[THE CHORUS goes towards the tomb of CRESPHONTES,  
and their leader brings back the axe.

O Husband, O clothed  
With the grave's everlasting,  
All-covering darkness ! O King,  
Well-mourn'd, but ill-avenged !  
Approv'st thou thy wife now ?——  
The axe !——who brings it ?

*The Chorus*

'Tis here !

But thy gesture, thy look,  
Appals me, shakes me with awe.

*Merope*

Thrust back now the bolt of that door !

*The Chorus*

Alas ! alas !——  
Behold the fastenings withdrawn  
Of the guest-chamber door !——  
Ah ! I beseech thee—with tears——

*Merope*

Throw the door open !

*The Chorus*

'Tis done! . . .

[*The door of the house is thrown open: the interior of the guest-chamber is discovered, with ÆPYTUS asleep on a couch.*]

*Merope*

He sleeps—sleeps calm. O ye all-seeing Gods!  
 Thus peacefully do ye let sinners sleep,  
 While troubled innocents toss, and lie awake?  
 What sweeter sleep than this could I desire  
 For thee, my child, if thou wert yet alive?  
 How often have I dream'd of thee like this,  
 With thy soil'd hunting-coat, and sandals torn,  
 Asleep in the Arcadian glens at noon,  
 Thy head droop'd softly, and the golden curls  
 Clustering o'er thy white forehead, like a girl's;  
 The short proud lip showing thy race, thy cheeks  
 Brown'd with thine open-air, free, hunter's life.  
 Ah me!

And where dost thou sleep now, my innocent boy?—  
 In some dark fir-tree's shadow, amid rocks  
 Untrodden, on Cyllenê's desolate side;  
 Where travellers never pass, where only come  
 Wild beasts, and vultures sailing overhead.  
 There, there thou liest now, my hapless child!  
 Stretch'd among briars and stones, the slow, black gore  
 Oozing through thy soak'd hunting-shirt, with limbs  
 Yet stark from the death-struggle, tight-clench'd hands,  
 And eyeballs staring for revenge in vain.  
 Ah miserable!

And thou, thou fair-skinn'd Serpent! thou art laid

In a rich chamber, on a happy bed,  
 In a king's house, thy victim's heritage ;  
 And drink'st untroubled slumber, to sleep off  
 'The toils of thy foul service, till thou wake  
 Refresh'd, and claim thy master's thanks and gold.—  
 Wake up in hell from thine unhallow'd sleep,  
 'Thou smiling Fiend, and claim thy guerdon there !  
 Wake amid gloom, and howling, and the noise  
 Of sinners pinion'd on the torturing wheel,  
 And the stanch Furies' never-silent scourge.  
 And bid the chief tormentors there provide  
 For a grand culprit shortly coming down.  
 Go thou the first, and usher in thy lord !  
 A more just stroke than that thou gav'st my son  
 Take——

[MEROPE *advances towards the sleeping ÆPYTUS,*  
*with the axe uplifted.* At the same moment ARCAS  
*re-enters.*

*Arcas (to the Chorus)*

Not with him to council did the King  
 Carry his messenger, but left him here.

[*Sees MEROPE and ÆPYTUS.*

O Gods ! . . .

*Merope*

Foolish old man, thou spoil'st my blow !

*Arcas*

What do I see ? . . .

*Merope*

A murderer at death's door.

Therefore no words !

*Arcas*

A murderer? . . .

*Merope*

And a captive

To the dear next-of-kin of him he murder'd.

Stand, and let vengeance pass!

*Arcas*

Hold, O Queen, hold!

Thou know'st not whom thou strik'st . . .

*Merope*

I know his crime.

*Arcas*

Unhappy one! thou strik'st——

*Merope*

A most just blow.

*Arcas*

No, by the Gods, thou slay'st——

*Merope*

Stand off!

*Arcas*

Thy son!



*Merope*

Ah ! . . .

[*She lets the axe drop, and falls insensible.*]

*Epytus (awaking)*

Who are these ? What shrill, ear-piercing scream  
Wakes me thus kindly from the perilous sleep  
Wherewith fatigue and youth had bound mine eyes,  
Even in the deadly palace of my foe ?—  
Arcas ! Thou here ?

*Arcas (embracing him)*

O my dear master ! O  
My child, my charge beloved, welcome to life !  
As dead we held thee, mourn'd for thee as dead.

*Epytus*

In word I died, that I in deed might live.  
But who are these ?

*Arcas*

Messenian maidens, friends.

*Epytus*

And, Arcas !—but I tremble !

*Arcas*

Boldly ask.

*Epytus*

That black-robed, swooning figure ? . . .

*Arcas*

Merope.

*Æpytus*

O mother ! mother !

*Merope*

Who upbraids me? Ah! . . .

[*seeing the axe.*

*Æpytus*

Upbraids thee? no one.

*Merope*

Thou dost well : but take . . .

*Æpytus*

What wav'st thou off?

*Merope*

That murderous axe away !

*Æpytus*

Thy son is here.

*Merope*

One said so, sure, but now.

*Æpytus*

Here, here thou hast him !

*Merope*

Slaughter'd by this hand! . . .

*Æpytus*

No, by the Gods, alive and like to live!

*Merope*

What, thou?—I dream——

*Æpytus*

May'st thou dream ever so!

*Merope (advancing towards him)*

My child? unhurt? . . .

*Æpytus*

Only by over joy

*Merope*

Art thou, then, come? . . .

*Æpytus*

Never to part again.

[*They fall into one another's arms. Then MEROPE, holding ÆPYTUS by the hand, turns to THE CHORUS.*

*Merope*

O kind Messenian maidens, O my friends,  
Bear witness, see, mark well, on what a head  
My first stroke of revenge had nearly fallen!

*The Chorus*

We see, dear mistress : and we say, the Gods,  
As hitherto they kept him, keep him now.

*Merope*

O my son !

I have, I have thee . . . the years  
Fly back, my child ! and thou seem'st  
Ne'er to have gone from these eyes,  
Never been torn from this breast.

*str.**Æpytus*

Mother, my heart runs over ; but the time  
Presses me, chides me, will not let me weep.

*Merope*

Fearst thou now ?

*Æpytus*

I fear not, but I think on my design.

*Merope*

At the undried fount of this breast,  
A babe, thou smilest again.  
Thy brothers play at my feet,  
Early-slain innocents ! near,  
Thy kind-speaking father stands

*Æpytus*

Remember, to revenge his death I come !

*Merope*

Ah . . . revenge ! *ant.*  
 That word ! it kills me ! I see  
 Once more roll back on my house,  
 Never to ebb, the accurst  
 All-flooding ocean of blood.

*Æpytus*

Mother, sometimes the justice of the Gods  
 Appoints the way to peace through shedding blood.

*Merope*

Sorrowful peace !

*Æpytus*

And yet the only peace to us allow'd.

*Merope*

From the first-wrought vengeance is born  
 A long succession of crimes.  
 Fresh blood flows, calling for blood.  
 Fathers, sons, grandsons, are all  
 One death-dealing vengeful train.

*Æpytus*

Mother, thy fears are idle ; for I come  
 To close an old wound, not to open new  
 In all else willing to be taught, in this  
 Instruct me not ; I have my lesson clear.—  
 Arcas, seek out my uncle Laias, now  
 Conferring in the city with our friends ;

Here bring him, ere the king come back from council.  
That, how to accomplish what the Gods enjoin,  
And the slow-ripening time at last prepares,  
We two with thee, my mother, may consult ;  
For whose help dare I count on, if not thine ?

*Merope*

Approves my brother Laias this intent ?

*Æpytus*

Yes, and alone is with me here to share.

*Merope*

And what of thine Arcadian mate, who bears  
Suspicion from thy grandsire of thy death,  
For whom, as I suppose, thou passest here ?

*Æpytus*

Sworn to our plot he is ; if false surmise  
Fix him the author of my death, I know not

*Merope*

Proof, not surmise, shows him in commerce close——

*Æpytus*

With this Messenian tyrant—that I know.

*Merope*

And entertain'st thou, child, such dangerous friends ?

*Æpytus*

This commerce for my best behoof he plies.

*Merope*

That thou may'st read thine enemy's counsel plain?

*Epytus*

Too dear his secret wiles have cost our house.

*Merope*

And of his unsure agent what demands he?

*Epytus*

News of my business, pastime, temper, friends.

*Merope*

His messages, then, point not to thy murder?

*Epytus*

Not yet, though such, no doubt, his final aim.

*Merope*

And what Arcadian helpers bring'st thou here?

*Epytus*

Laias alone ; no errand mine for crowds.

*Merope*

On what relying, to crush such a foe?

*Epytus*

One sudden stroke, and the Messenians' love.

*Merope*

O thou long-lost, long seen in dreams alone,  
But now seen face to face, my only child !  
Why wilt thou fly to lose as soon as found  
My new-won treasure, thy belovéd life ?  
Or how expectest not to lose, who com'st  
With such slight means to cope with such a foe ?  
Thine enemy thou know'st not, nor his strength.  
The stroke thou purpos'est is desperate, rash—  
Yet grant that it succeeds—thou hast behind  
The stricken king a second enemy  
Scarce dangerous less than him, the Dorian lords.  
These are not now the savage band who erst  
Follow'd thy father from their northern hills,  
Mere ruthless and uncounsell'd wolves of war,  
Good to obey, without a leader nought.  
Their chief hath train'd them, made them like himself,  
Sagacious, men of iron, watchful, firm,  
Against surprise and sudden panic proof.  
Their master fall'n, these will not flinch, but band  
To keep their master's power ; thou wilt find  
Behind his corpse their hedge of serried spears.  
But, to match these, thou hast the people's love ?  
On what a reed, my child, thou leanest there !  
Knowest thou not how timorous, how unsure,  
How useless an ally a people is  
Against the one and certain arm of power ?  
Thy father perish'd in this people's cause,  
Perish'd before their eyes, yet no man stirr'd !  
For years, his widow, in their sight I stand,  
A never-changing index to revenge—  
What help, what vengeance, at their hands have I ?



At least, if thou wilt trust them, try them first.  
 Against the King himself array the host  
 Thou countest on to back thee 'gainst his lords ;  
 First rally the Messenians to thy cause,  
 Give them cohesion, purpose, and resolve,  
 Marshal them to an army—then advance,  
 Then try the issue ; and not, rushing on  
 Single and friendless, give to certain death  
 That dear-beloved, that young, that gracious head.  
 Be guided, O my son ! spurn counsel not !  
 For know thou this, a violent heart hath been  
 Fatal to all the race of Heracles.

*The Chorus*

With sage experience she speaks ; and thou,  
 O Æpytus, weigh well her counsel given.

*Æpytus*

Ill counsel, in my judgment, gives she here,  
 Maidens, and reads experience much amiss ;  
 Discrediting the succour which our cause  
 Might from the people draw, if rightly used ;  
 Advising us a course which would, indeed,  
 If follow'd, make their succour slack and null.  
 A people is no army, train'd to fight,  
 A passive engine, at their general's will ;  
 And, if so used, proves, as thou say'st, unsure.  
 A people, like a common man, is dull,  
 Is lifeless, while its heart remains untouch'd ;  
 A fool can drive it, and a fly may scare.  
 When it admires and loves, its heart awakes :  
 Then irresistibly it lives, it works ;

A people, then, is an ally indeed—  
It is ten thousand fiery wills in one.  
Now I, if I invite them to run risk  
Of life for my advantage, and myself,  
Who chiefly profit, run no more than they—  
How shall I rouse their love, their ardour so?  
But, if some signal, unassisted stroke,  
Dealt at my own sole risk, before their eyes,  
Announces me their rightful prince return'd—  
The undegenerate blood of Heracles—  
The daring claimant of a perilous throne—  
How might not such a sight as this revive  
Their loyal passion tow'rd my father's house,  
Kindle their hearts, make them no more a mob,  
A craven mob, but a devouring fire?  
Then might I use them, then, for one who thus  
Spares not himself, themselves they will not spare.  
Haply, had but one daring soul stood forth  
To rally them and lead them to revenge,  
When my great father fell, they had replied!  
Alas! our foe alone stood forward then.  
And thou, my mother, hadst thou made a sign—  
Hadst thou, from thy forlorn and captive state  
Of widowhood in these polluted halls,  
Thy prison-house, raised one imploring cry—  
Who knows but that avengers thou hadst found?  
But mute thou sat'st, and each Messenian heart  
In thy despondency desponded too.  
Enough of this!—Though not a finger stir  
To succour me in my extremest need;  
Though all free spirits in this land were dead,  
And only slaves and tyrants left alive;  
Yet for me, mother, I had liefer die

On native ground, than drag the tedious hours  
 Of a protected exile any more.  
 Hate, duty, interest, passion call one way ;  
 Here stand I now, and the attempt shall be.

*The Chorus*

Prudence is on the other side ; but deeds  
 Condemn'd by prudence have sometimes gone well.

*Merope*

Not till the ways of prudence all are tried,  
 And tried in vain, the turn of rashness comes.  
 Thou leapest to thy deed, and hast not ask'd  
 Thy kinsfolk and thy father's friends for aid.

*Epytus*

And to what friends should I for aid apply ?

*Merope*

The royal race of Temenus, in Argos——

*Epytus*

That house, like ours, intestine murder maims.

*Merope*

Thy Spartan cousins, Procles and his brother——

*Epytus*

Love a won cause, but not a cause to win.

*Merope*

My father, then, and his Arcadian chiefs——

*Æpytus*

Mean still to keep aloof from Dorian broil.

*Merope*

Wait, then, until sufficient help appears

*Æpytus*

Orestes in Mycenæ had no more.

*Merope*

He to fulfil an order raised his hand.

*Æpytus*

What order more precise had he than I?

*Merope*

Apollo peal'd it from his Delphian cave.

*Æpytus*

A mother's murder needed hest divine.

*Merope*

He had a hest, at least, and thou hast none.

*Æpytus*

The Gods command not where the heart speaks clear.

*Merope*

'Thou wilt destroy, I see, thyself and us.

*Æpytus*

O suffering! O calamity! how ten,  
How twentyfold worse are ye, when your blows  
Not only wound the sense, but kill the soul,  
The noble thought, which is alone the man!  
That I, to-day returning, find myself  
Orphan'd of both my parents—by his foes  
My father, by your strokes my mother slain!  
For this is not my mother, who dissuades,  
At the dread altar of her husband's tomb,  
His son from vengeance on his murderer;  
And not alone dissuades him, but compares  
His just revenge to an unnatural deed,  
A deed so awful, that the general tongue  
Fluent of horrors, falters to relate it—  
Of darkness so tremendous, that its author,  
Though to his act empower'd, nay, impell'd,  
By the oracular sentence of the Gods,  
Fled, for years after, o'er the face of earth,  
A frenzied wanderer, a God-driven man,  
And hardly yet, some say, hath found a grave—  
With such a deed as *this* thou matchest mine,  
Which Nature sanctions, which the innocent blood  
Clamours to find fulfill'd, which good men praise,  
And only bad men joy to see undone!  
O honour'd father! hide thee in thy grave  
Deep as thou canst, for hence no succour comes;  
Since from thy faithful subjects what revenge  
Canst thou expect, when thus thy widow fails?  
Alas! an adamantine strength indeed,  
Past expectation, hath thy murderer built;

For this is the true strength of guilty kings,  
When they corrupt the souls of those they rule.

*The Chorus*

Zeal makes him most unjust ; but, in good time,  
Here, as I guess, the noble Laias comes.

*Laias*

Break off, break off your talking, and depart  
Each to his post, where the occasion calls ;  
Lest from the council-chamber presently  
The King return, and find you prating here.  
A time will come for greetings ; but to-day  
The hour for words is gone, is come for deeds.

*Æpytus*

O princely Laias ! to what purpose calls  
The occasion, if our chief confederate fails ?  
My mother stands aloof, and blames our deed.

*Laias*

My royal sister ? . . . but, without some cause,  
I know, she honours not the dead so ill.

*Merope*

Brother, it seems thy sister must present,  
At this first meeting after absence long,  
Not welcome, exculpation to her kin ;  
Yet exculpation needs it, if I seek,  
A woman and a mother, to avert  
Risk from my new-restored, my only son ?—

Sometimes, when he was gone, I wish'd him back,  
 Risk what he might ; now that I have him here,  
 Now that I feed mine eyes on that young face,  
 Hear that fresh voice, and clasp that gold-lock'd head,  
 I shudder, Laias, to commit my child  
 To murder's dread arena, where I saw  
 His father and his ill-starr'd brethren fall !  
 I loathe for him the slippery way of blood ;  
 I ask if bloodless means may gain his end.  
 In me the fever of revengeful hate,  
 Passion's first furious longing to imbrue  
 Our own right hand in the detested blood  
 Of enemies, and count their dying groans—  
 If in this feeble bosom such a fire  
 Did ever burn—is long by time allay'd,  
 And I would now have Justice strike, not me.  
 Besides—for from my brother and my son  
 I hide not even this—the reverence deep,  
 Remorseful, tow'rd my hostile solitude,  
 By Polyphontes never fail'd-in once  
 Through twenty years ; his mournful anxious zeal  
 To efface in me the memory of his crime—  
 Though it efface not that, yet makes me wish  
 His death a public, not a personal act,  
 Treacherously plotted 'twixt my son and me ;  
 To whom this day he came to proffer peace,  
 Treaty, and to this kingdom for my son  
 Heirship, with fair intent, as I believe.—  
 For that he plots thy death, account it false ;

[to ÆPYTUS.

Number it with the thousand rumours vain,  
 Figments of plots, wherewith intriguers fill  
 The enforcéd leisure of an exile's ear.

Immersed in serious state-craft is the King,  
 Bent above all to pacify, to rule,  
 Rigidly, yet in settled calm, this realm ;  
 Not prone, all say, averse to bloodshed now.—  
 So much is due to truth, even tow'rds our foe.

[to LAIAS

Do I, then, give to usurpation grace,  
 And from his natural rights my son debar ?  
 Not so ! let him—and none shall be more prompt  
 Than I to help—raise his Messenian friends ;  
 Let him fetch succours from Arcadia, gain  
 His Argive or his Spartan cousins' aid ;  
 Let him do this, do aught but recommence  
 Murder's uncertain, secret, perilous game—  
 And I, when to his righteous standard down  
 Flies Victory wing'd, and Justice raises *then*  
 Her sword, will be the first to bid it fall.  
 If, haply, at this moment, such attempt  
 Promise not fair, let him a little while  
 Have faith, and trust the future and the Gods.  
 He may ; for never did the Gods allow  
 Fast permanence to an ill-gotten throne.—  
 These are but woman's words—yet, Lias, thou  
 Despise them not ! for, brother, thou and I  
 Were not among the feuds of warrior-chiefs,  
 Each sovereign for his dear-bought hour, born ;  
 But in the pastoral Arcadia rear'd,  
 With Cypselus our father, where we saw  
 The simple patriarchal state of kings,  
 Where sire to son transmits the unquesti'on'd crown,  
 Unhack'd, unsmirch'd, unbloodied, and have learnt  
 That spotless hands unshaken sceptres hold.  
 Having learnt this, then, use thy knowledge now.



*The Chorus*

Which way to lean I know not : bloody strokes  
Are never free from doubt, though sometimes due.

*Laias*

O Merope, the common heart of man  
Agrees to deem some deeds so dark in guilt,  
That neither gratitude, nor tie of race,  
Womanly pity, nor maternal fear,  
Nor any pleader else, shall be indulged  
To breathe a syllable to bar revenge.  
All this, no doubt, thou to thyself hast urged—  
Time presses, so that theme forbear I now ;  
Direct to thy dissuasions I reply.  
Blood-founded thrones, thou say'st, are insecure ;  
Our father's kingdom, because pure, is safe.  
True ; but what cause to our Arcadia gives  
Its privileged immunity from blood,  
But that, since first the black and fruitful Earth  
In the primeval mountain-forests bore  
Pelagus, our forefather and mankind's,  
Legitimately sire to son, with us,  
Bequeaths the allegiance of our shepherd-tribes,  
More loyal, as our line continues more ?—  
How can your Heracleidan chiefs inspire  
This awe which guards our earth-sprung, lineal kings ?  
What permanence, what stability like ours,  
Whether blood flows or no, can yet invest  
The broken order of your Dorian thrones,  
Fix'd yesterday, and ten times changed since then ?—  
Two brothers, and their orphan nephews, strove

For the three conquer'd kingdoms of this isle ;  
 The eldest, mightiest brother, Temenus, took  
 Argos ; a juggle to Cresphontes gave  
 Messenia ; to those helpless Boys, the lot  
 Worst of the three, the stony Sparta, fell.  
 August, indeed, was the foundation here !  
 What follow'd ?—His most trusted kinsman slew  
 Cresphontes in Messenia ; Temenus  
 Perish'd in Argos by his jealous sons ;  
 The Spartan Brothers with their guardian strive.  
 Can houses thus ill-seated, thus embroil'd,  
 Thus little founded in their subjects' love,  
 Practise the indulgent, bloodless policy  
 Of dynasties long-fix'd, and honour'd long ?  
 No ! Vigour and severity must chain  
 Popular reverence to these recent lines.  
 Be their first-founded order strict maintain'd—  
 Their murder'd rulers terribly avenged—  
 Ruthlessly their rebellious subjects crush'd !  
 Since policy bids thus, what fouler death  
 Than thine illustrious husband's to avenge  
 Shall we select ? than Polyphontes, what  
 More daring and more grand offender find ?  
 Justice, my sister, long demands this blow,  
 And Wisdom, now thou see'st, demands it too.  
 To strike it, then, dissuade thy son no more ;  
 For to live disobedient to these two,  
 Justice and Wisdom, is no life at all.

*The Chorus*

The Gods, O mistress dear ! the hard-soul'd man,  
 Who spared not others, bid not us to spare.

*Merope*

Alas ! against my brother, son, and friends,  
 One, and a woman, how can I prevail?—  
 O brother, thou hast conquer'd ; yet, I fear !  
 Son ! with a doubting heart thy mother yields ;  
 May it turn happier than my doubts portend !

*Laias*

Meantime on thee the task of silence only  
 Shall be imposed ; to us shall be the deed.  
 Now, not another word, but to our act !  
 Nephew ! thy friends are sounded, and prove true.  
 Thy father's murderer, in the public place,  
 Performs, this noon, a solemn sacrifice ;  
 Be with him—choose the moment—strike thy blow !  
 If prudence counsels thee to go unarm'd,  
 The sacrificer's axe will serve thy turn.  
 To me and the Messenians leave the rest,  
 With the Gods' aid—and, if they give but aid  
 As our just cause deserves, I do not fear.

[ÆPYTUS, LAIAS, and ARCAS go out.]

*The Chorus*

O Son and Mother,  
 Whom the Gods o'ershadow  
 In dangerous trial,  
 With certainty of favour !  
 As erst they shadow'd  
 Your race's founders  
 From irretrievable woe ;  
 When the seed of Lycaon

*str. I.*

Lay forlorn, lay outcast,  
Callisto and her Boy.

What deep-grass'd meadow *ant.* 1.  
At the meeting valleys—  
Where clear-flowing Ladon,  
Most beautiful of waters,  
Receives the river  
Whose trout are vocal,  
The Aroanian stream—  
Without home, without mother,  
Hid the babe, hid Arcas,  
The nursling of the dells?

But the sweet-smelling myrtle, *str.* 2.  
And the pink-flower'd oleander,  
And the green agnus-castus,  
To the west-wind's murmur,  
Rustled round his cradle ;  
And Maia rear'd him.  
Then, a boy, he startled,  
In the snow-fill'd hollows  
Of high Cyllenê,  
The white mountain-birds ;  
Or surprised, in the glens,  
The basking tortoises,  
Whose striped shell founded  
In the hand of Hermes  
The glory of the lyre.

But his mother, Callisto, *ant.* 2.  
In her hiding-place of the thickets  
Of the lentisk and ilex  
In her rough form, fearing

The hunter on the outlook,  
 Poor changeling ! trembled.  
 Or the children, plucking  
 In the thorn-choked gullies  
 Wild gooseberries, scared her,  
 The shy mountain-bear !  
 Or the shepherds, on slopes  
 With pale-spiked lavender  
 And crisp thyme tufted,  
 Came upon her, stealing  
 At day-break through the dew.

Once, 'mid those gorges, *str.* 3.  
 Spray-drizzled, lonely,  
 Unclimb'd of man—  
 O'er whose cliffs the townsmen  
 Of crag-perch'd Nonacris  
 Behold in summer  
 The slender torrent  
 Of Styx come dancing,  
 A wind-blown thread—  
 By the precipices of Khelmos,  
 The fleet, desperate hunter,  
 The youthful Arcas, born of Zeus,  
 His fleeing mother,  
 Transform'd Callisto,  
 Unwitting follow'd—  
 And raised his spear.

Turning, with piteous, *ant.* 3.  
 Distressful longing,  
 Sad, eager eyes,  
 Mutely she regarded  
 Her well-known enemy.

Low moans half utter'd  
 What speech refused her ;  
 Tears coursed, tears human,  
 Down those disfigured,  
 Once human cheeks.  
 With unutterable foreboding  
 Her son, heart-stricken, eyed her.  
 'The Gods had pity, made them Stars.  
 Stars now they sparkle  
 In the northern Heaven—  
 The guard Arcturus,  
 The guard-watch'd Bear.

So, o'er thee and thy child,  
 Some God, Merope, now,  
 In dangerous hour, stretches his hand.  
 So, like a star, dawns thy son,  
 Radiant with fortune and joy.

*epode.*

[POLYPHONTES *comes in.*

*Polyphontes*

O Merope, the trouble on thy face  
 'Tells me enough thou know'st the news which all  
 Messenia speaks ! the prince, thy son, is dead.  
 Not from my lips should consolation fall ;  
 'To offer that, I come not ; but to urge,  
 Even after news of this sad death, our league.  
 Yes, once again I come ; I will not take  
 'This morning's angry answer for thy last.  
 To the Messenian kingdom thou and I  
 Are the sole claimants left ; what cause of strife  
 Lay in thy son is buried in his grave.  
 Most honourably I meant, I call the Gods

To witness, offering him return and power ;  
 Yet, had he lived, suspicion, jealousy,  
 Inevitably had surged up, perhaps,  
 'Twixt thee and me—suspicion, that I nursed  
 Some ill design against him ; jealousy,  
 That he enjoy'd but part, being heir to all.  
 And he himself, with the impetuous heart  
 Of youth, 'tis like, had never quite forgone  
 The thought of vengeance on me, never quite  
 Unclosed his itching fingers from his sword.  
 But thou, O Merope, though deeply wrong'd,  
 Though injured past forgiveness, as men deem,  
 Yet hast been long at school with thoughtful time,  
 And from that teacher may'st have learn'd, like me,  
 That all may be endured, and all forgiv'n—  
 Have learn'd, that we must sacrifice the bent  
 Of personal feeling to the public weal—  
 Have learn'd, that there are guilty deeds, which leave  
 The hand that does them guiltless ; in a word,  
 That kings live for their peoples, not themselves.  
 This having known, let us a union found  
 (For the last time I ask, ask earnestly)  
 Based on pure public welfare ; let us be  
 Not Merope and Polyphontes, foes  
 Blood-sever'd, but Messenia's King and Queen !  
 Let us forget ourselves for those we rule !  
 Speak ! I go hence to offer sacrifice  
 To the Preserver Zeus ; let me return  
 Thanks to him for our amity as well.

*Merope*

Oh had'st thou, Polyphontes, still but kept  
 The silence thou hast kept for twenty years !

*Polyphontes*

Henceforth, if what I urge displease, I may.  
But fair proposal merits fair reply.

*Merope*

And thou shalt have it! Yes, because thou *hast*  
For twenty years forborne to interrupt  
The solitude of her whom thou hast wrong'd—  
That scanty grace shall earn thee this reply.—  
First, for our union. Trust me, 'twixt us two  
The brazen-footed Fury ever stalks,  
Waving her hundred hands, a torch in each,  
Aglow with angry fire, to keep us twain.  
Now, for thyself. Thou com'st with well-cloak'd joy,  
To announce the ruin of my husband's house,  
To sound thy triumph in his widow's ears,  
To bid her share thine unendanger'd throne.  
To this thou would'st have answer. Take it: Fly! . . .  
Cut short thy triumph, seeming at its height;  
Fling off thy crown, supposed at last secure;  
Forsake this ample, proud Messenian realm;  
To some small, humble, and unnoted strand,  
Some rock more lonely than that Lemnian isle  
Where Philoctetes pined, take ship and flee!  
Some solitude more inaccessible  
Than the ice-bastion'd Caucasian Mount  
Chosen a prison for Prometheus, climb!  
There in unvoiced oblivion sink thy name,  
And bid the sun, thine only visitant,  
Divulge not to the far-off world of men  
What once-famed wretch he there did espy hid.  
There nurse a late remorse, and thank the Gods,



And thank thy bitterest foe, that, having lost  
All things but life, thou lose not life as well.

*Polyphontes*

What mad bewilderment of grief is this?

*Merope*

*Thou* art bewilder'd ; the sane head is mine.

*Polyphontes*

I pity thee, and wish thee calmer mind.

*Merope*

Pity thyself ; none needs compassion more.

*Polyphontes*

Yet, oh ! could'st thou but act as reason bids !

*Merope*

And in my turn I wish the same for thee.

*Polyphontes*

All I could do to soothe thee has been tried.

*Merope*

For that, in this my warning, thou art paid.

*Polyphontes*

Know'st thou then aught, that thus thou sound'st the  
alarm ?

*Merope*

Thy crime ! that were enough to make one fear.

*Polyphontes*

My deed is of old date, and long atoned.

*Merope*

Atoned this very day, perhaps, it is.

*Polyphontes*

My final victory proves the Gods appeased.

*Merope*

O victor, victor, trip not at the goal !

*Polyphontes*

Hatred and passionate envy blind thine eyes.

*Merope*

O Heaven-abandon'd wretch, that envies thee !

*Polyphontes*

Thou hold'st so cheap, then, the Messenian crown ?

*Merope*

I think on what the future hath in store.

*Polyphontes*

To-day I reign ; the rest I leave to Fate.

*Merope*

For Fate thou wait'st not long ; since, in this hour——

*Polyphontes*

What ? for so far Fate hath not proved my foe——

*Merope*

Fate seals my lips, and drags to ruin thee.

*Polyphontes*

Enough ! enough ! I will no longer hear  
 The ill-boding note which frantic hatred sounds  
 To affright a fortune which the Gods secure.  
 Once more my friendship thou rejectest ; well !  
 More for this land's sake grieve I, than mine own.  
 I chafe not with thee, that thy hate endures,  
 Nor bend myself too low, to make it yield.  
 What I have done is done ; by my own deed,  
 Neither exulting nor ashamed, I stand.  
 Why should this heart of mine set mighty store  
 By the construction and report of men ?  
 Not men's good word hath made me what I am.  
 Alone I master'd power ; and alone,  
 Since so thou wilt, I dare maintain it still.

[POLYPHONTES *goes out.*

*The Chorus*

Did I then waver  
 (O woman's judgment !)  
 Mised by seeming

*str. I.*

Success of crime?  
 And ask, if sometimes  
 The Gods, perhaps, allow'd you,  
 O lawless daring of the strong,  
 O self-will recklessly indulged?

Not time, not lightning, *ant. 1*  
 Not rain, not thunder,  
 Efface the endless  
 Decrees of Heaven—  
 Make Justice alter,  
 Revoke, assuage her sentence,  
 Which dooms dread ends to dreadful deeds,  
 And violent deaths to violent men.

But the signal example *str. 2.*  
 Of invariableness of justice  
 Our glorious founder  
 Heracles gave us,  
 Son loved of Zeus his father—for he sinn'd,

And the strand of Eubœa, *ant. 2.*  
 And the promontory of Cenæum,  
 His painful, solemn  
 Punishment witness'd,  
 Beheld his expiation—for he died.

O villages of Cœta *str. 3.*  
 With hedges of the wild rose!  
 O pastures of the mountain,  
 Of short grass, beaded with dew,  
 Between the pine-woods and the cliffs!  
 O cliffs, left by the eagles,  
 On that morn, when the smoke-cloud

From the oak-built, fiercely-burning pyre,  
 Up the precipices of Trachis,  
 Drove them screaming from their eyries !  
 A willing, a willing sacrifice on that day  
 Ye witness'd, ye mountain lawns,  
 When the shirt-wrapt, poison-blister'd Hero  
 Ascended, with undaunted heart,  
 Living, his own funeral-pile,  
 And stood, shouting for a fiery torch ;  
 And the kind, chance-arrived Wanderer,<sup>30</sup>  
 The inheritor of the bow,  
 Coming swiftly through the sad Trachinians,  
 Put the torch to the pile.  
 That the flame tower'd on high to the Heaven ;  
 Bearing with it, to Olympus,  
 To the side of Hebe,  
 To immortal delight,  
 The labour-released Hero.

O heritage of Neleus,  
 Ill-kept by his infirm heirs !  
 O kingdom of Messenê,  
 Of rich soil, chosen by craft,  
 Possess'd in hatred, lost in blood !  
 O town, high Stenyclaros,  
 With new walls, which the victors  
 From the four-town'd, mountain-shadow'd Doris,  
 For their Heracles-issued princes  
 Built in strength against the vanquish'd !  
 Another, another sacrifice on this day  
 Ye witness, ye new-built towers !  
 When the white-robed, garland-crowned Monarch  
 Approaches, with undoubting heart,

*ant.* 3.

Living, his own sacrifice-block,  
 And stands, shouting for a slaughterous axe ;  
 And the stern, destiny-brought Stranger,  
 The inheritor of the realm,  
 Coming swiftly through the jocund Dorians,  
 Drives the axe to its goal.  
 That the blood rushes in streams to the dust ;  
 Bearing with it, to Erinnyes,  
 To the Gods of Hades,  
 To the dead unavenged,  
 The fiercely-required Victim.

Knowing he did it, unknowing pays for it. [*epode.*  
 Unknowing, unknowing,  
 Thinking atoned-for  
 Deeds unatonable,  
 Thinking appeased  
 Gods unappeasable,  
 Lo, the ill-fated one,  
 Standing for harbour  
 Right at the harbour-mouth  
 Strikes with all sail set  
 Full on the sharp-pointed  
 Needle of ruin !

[*A MESSENGER comes in.*

*Messenger*

O honour'd Queen, O faithful followers  
 Of your dead master's line, I bring you news  
 To make the gates of this long-mournful house  
 Leap, and fly open of themselves for joy !

[*noise and shouting heard.*

Hark how the shouting crowds tramp hitherward

With glad acclaim ! Ere they forestall my news,  
Accept it :—Polyphontes is no more.

*Merope*

Is my son safe ? that question bounds my care.

*Messenger*

He is, and by the people hail'd for king.

*Merope*

The rest to me is little ; yet, since that  
Must from some mouth be heard, relate it thou.

*Messenger*

Not little, if thou saw'st what love, what zeal,  
At thy dead husband's name the people show.  
For when this morning in the public square  
I took my stand, and saw the unarm'd crowds  
Of citizens in holiday attire,  
Women and children intermix'd ; and then,  
Group'd around Zeus's altar, all in arms,  
Serried and grim, the ring of Dorian lords—  
I trembled for our prince and his attempt.  
Silence and expectation held us all ;  
Till presently the King came forth, in robe  
Of sacrifice, his guards clearing the way  
Before him—at his side, the prince, thy son,  
Unarm'd and travel-soil'd, just as he was.  
With him conferring the King slowly reach'd  
The altar in the middle of the square,  
Where, by the sacrificing minister,  
The flower-dress'd victim stood—a milk-white bull,

Swaying from side to side his massy head  
 With short impatient lowings. There he stopp'd,  
 And seem'd to muse awhile, then raised his eyes  
 To heaven, and laid his hand upon the steer,  
 And cried : *O Zeus, let what blood-guiltiness  
 Yet stains our land be by this blood wash'd out,  
 And grant henceforth to the Messenians peace !*  
 That moment, while with upturn'd eyes he pray'd,  
 The prince snatch'd from the sacrificer's hand  
 The axe, and on the forehead of the King,  
 Where twines the chaplet, dealt a mighty blow  
 Which fell'd him to the earth, and o'er him stood,  
 And shouted : *Since by thee deflement came,  
 What blood so meet as thine to wash it out ?  
 What hand to strike thee meet as mine, the hand  
 Of Ægyptus, thy murder'd master's son ?—*  
 But, gazing at him from the ground, the King . . .  
*Is it, then, thou ?* he murmur'd ; and with that,  
 He bow'd his head, and deeply groan'd, and died.  
 Till then we all seem'd stone, but then a cry  
 Broke from the Dorian lords ; forward they rush'd  
 To circle the prince round—when suddenly  
 Laias in arms sprang to his nephew's side,  
 Crying : *O ye Messenians, will ye leave  
 The son to perish as ye left the sire ?*  
 And from that moment I saw nothing clear ;  
 For from all sides a deluge, as it seem'd  
 Burst o'er the altar and the Dorian lords,  
 Of holiday-clad citizens transform'd  
 To armed warriors ;—I heard vengeful cries,  
 I heard the clash of weapons ; then I saw  
 The Dorians lying dead, thy son hail'd king.  
 And, truly, one who sees, what seem'd so strong,



The power of this tyrant and his lords,  
 Melt like a passing smoke, a nightly dream,  
 At one bold word, one enterprising blow—  
 Might ask, why we endured their yoke so long ;  
 But that we know how every perilous feat  
 Of daring, easy as it seems when done,  
 Is easy at no moment but the right.

*The Chorus*

Thou speakest well ; but here, to give our eyes  
 Authentic proof of what thou tell'st our ears,  
 The conquerors, with the King's dead body, come.

[ÆPYTUS, LAIAS, and ARCAS come in with the dead  
 body of POLYPHONTES, followed by a crowd of the  
 MESSENIANS.]

*Laias*

Sister, from this day forth thou art no more  
 The widow of a husband unavenged,  
 The anxious mother of an exiled son.  
 Thine enemy is slain, thy son is king !  
 Rejoice with us ! and trust me, he who wish'd  
 Welfare to the Messenian state, and calm,  
 Could find no way to found them sure as this.

*Æpytus*

Mother, all these approve me ; but if thou  
 Approve not too, I have but half my joy.

*Merope*

O Æpytus, my son, behold, behold  
 This iron man, my enemy and thine,

This politic sovereign, lying at our feet,  
 With blood-bespatter'd robes, and chaplet shorn !  
 Inscrutable as ever, see, it keeps  
 Its sombre aspect of majestic care,  
 Of solitary thought, unshared resolve,  
 Even in death, that countenance austere !  
 So look'd he, when to Stenyclaros first,  
 A new-made wife, I from Arcadia came,  
 And found him at my husband's side, his friend,  
 His kinsman, his right hand in peace and war,  
 Unsparing in his service of his toil,  
 His blood—to me, for I confess it, kind ;  
 So look'd he in that dreadful day of death ;  
 So, when he pleaded for our league but now.  
 What meantest thou, O Polyphontes, what  
 Desired'st thou, what truly spurr'd thee on ?  
 Was policy of state, the ascendancy  
 Of the Heracleidan conquerors, as thou said'st,  
 Indeed thy lifelong passion and sole aim ?  
 Or did'st thou but, as cautious schemers use,  
 Cloak thine ambition with these specious words ?  
 I know not ; just, in either case, the stroke  
 Which laid thee low, for blood requires blood ;  
 But yet, not knowing this, I triumph not  
 Over thy corpse—triumph not, neither mourn,—  
 For I find worth in thee, and badness too.  
 What mood of spirit, therefore, shall we call  
 The true one of a man—what way of life  
 His fix'd condition and perpetual walk ?  
 None, since a twofold colour reigns in all.  
 But thou, my son, study to make prevail  
 One colour in thy life, the hue of truth ;  
 That justice, that sage order, not alone

Natural vengeance, may maintain thine act,  
 And make it stand indeed the will of Heaven  
 Thy father's passion was this people's ease,  
 This people's anarchy, thy foe's pretence.  
 As the chiefs rule, my son, the people are.  
 Unhappy people, where the chiefs themselves  
 Are, like the mob, vicious and ignorant !  
 So rule, that even thine enemies may fail  
 To find in thee a fault whereon to found,  
 Of tyrannous harshness, or remissness weak—  
 So rule, that as thy father thou be loved !  
 So rule, that as his foe thou be obey'd !  
 Take these, my son, over thine enemy's corpse  
 Thy mother's prayers ! and this prayer last of all :  
 That even in thy victory thou show,  
 Mortal, the moderation of a man.

*Æpytus*

O mother, my best diligence shall be  
 In all by thy experience to be ruled  
 Where my own youth falls short ! But, Laias, now,  
 First work after such victory, let us go  
 To render to my true Messenians thanks,  
 To the Gods grateful sacrifice ; and then,  
 Assume the ensigns of my father's power

*The Chorus*

Son of Cresphontes, past what perils  
 Com'st thou, guided safe, to thy home !  
 What things daring ! what enduring !  
 And all this by the will of the Gods.

# EMPEDOCLES ON ETNA

A DRAMATIC POEM

## PERSONS

EMPEDOCLES.

PAUSANIAS, *a Physician.*

CALLICLES, *a young Harp-player.*

*The Scene of the Poem is on Mount Etna ; at first in the forest region, afterwards on the summit of the mountain.*

## ACT I. SCENE I.

*Morning. A Pass in the forest region of Etna.*

## CALLICLES

*(Alone, resting on a rock by the path.)*

THE mules, I think, will not be here this hour ;  
They feel the cool wet turf under their feet  
By the stream-side, after the dusty lanes  
In which they have toil'd all night from Catana,  
And scarcely will they budge a yard. O Pan,  
How gracious is the mountain at this hour !  
A thousand times have I been here alone,  
Or with the revellers from the mountain-towns,  
But never on so fair a morn ;—the sun  
Is shining on the brilliant mountain-crests,

And on the highest pines ; but farther down,  
 Here in the valley, is in shade ; the sward  
 Is dark, and on the stream the mist still hangs ;  
 One sees one's footprints crush'd in the wet grass,  
 One's breath curls in the air ; and on these pines  
 That climb from the stream's edge, the long grey tufts,  
 Which the goats love, are jewell'd thick with dew.  
 Here will I stay till the slow litter comes.  
 I have my harp too—that is well.—Apollo !  
 What mortal could be sick or sorry here ?  
 I know not in what mind Empedocles,  
 Whose mules I follow'd, may be coming up,  
 But if, as most men say, he is half mad  
 With exile, and with brooding on his wrongs,  
 Pausanias, his sage friend, who mounts with him,  
 Could scarce have lighted on a lovelier cure.  
 The mules must be below, far down. I hear  
 Their tinkling bells, mix'd with the song of birds,  
 Rise faintly to me—now it stops !—Who's here ?  
 Pausanias ! and on foot ? alone ?

*Pausanias*

And thou, then ?

I left thee supping with Peisianax,  
 With thy head full of wine, and thy hair crown'd,  
 Touching thy harp as the whim came on thee,  
 And praised and spoil'd by master and by guests  
 Almost as much as the new dancing-girl.  
 Why hast thou follow'd us ?

*Callicles*

The night was hot,  
 And the feast past its prime ; so we slipp'd out,

Some of us, to the portico to breathe ;—  
 Peisianax, thou know'st, drinks late ;—and then,  
 As I was lifting my soil'd garland off,  
 I saw the mules and litter in the court,  
 And in the litter sate Empedocles ;  
 Thou, too, wast with him. Straightway I sped home ;  
 I saddled my white mule, and all night long  
 Through the cool lovely country follow'd you,  
 Pass'd you a little since as morning dawn'd,  
 And have this hour sate by the torrent here,  
 Till the slow mules should climb in sight again.  
 And now ?

*Pausanias*

And now, back to the town with speed !  
 Crouch in the wood first, till the mules have pass'd ;  
 They do but halt, they will be here anon.  
 Thou must be viewless to Empedocles ;  
 Save mine, he must not meet a human eye.  
 One of his moods is on him that thou know'st ;  
 I think, thou wouldst not vex him.

*Callicles*

No—and yet  
 I would fain stay, and help thee tend him. Once  
 He knew me well, and would oft notice me ;  
 And still, I know not how, he draws me to him,  
 And I could watch him with his proud sad face,  
 His flowing locks and gold-encircled brow  
 And kingly gait, for ever ; such a spell  
 In his severe looks, such a majesty  
 As drew of old the people after him,  
 In Agrigentum and Olympia,

When his star reign'd, before his banishment,  
 Is potent still on me in his decline.  
 But oh! Pausanias, he is changed of late ;  
 There is a settled trouble in his air  
 Admits no momentary brightening now,  
 And when he comes among his friends at feasts,  
 'Tis as an orphan among prosperous boys.  
 Thou know'st of old he loved this harp of mine,  
 When first he sojourn'd with Peisianax ;  
 He is now always moody, and I fear him ;  
 But I would serve him, soothe him, if I could,  
 Dared one but try.

*Pausanias*

Thou wast a kind child ever !  
 He loves thee, but he must not see thee now.  
 Thou hast indeed a rare touch on thy harp,  
 He loves that in thee, too ;—there was a time  
 (But that is pass'd), he would have paid thy strain  
 With music to have drawn the stars from heaven.  
 He hath his harp and laurel with him still,  
 But he has laid the use of music by,  
 And all which might relax his settled gloom.  
 Yet thou may'st try thy playing, if thou wilt—  
 But thou must keep unseen ; follow us on,  
 But at a distance ! in these solitudes,  
 In this clear mountain-air, a voice will rise,  
 Though from afar, distinctly ; it may soothe him.  
 Play when we halt, and, when the evening comes  
 And I must leave him (for his pleasure is  
 To be left musing these soft nights alone  
 In the high unfrequented mountain-spots),  
 Then watch him, for he ranges swift and far,

Sometimes to Etna's top, and to the cone ;  
 But hide thee in the rocks a great way down,  
 And try thy noblest strains, my Callicles,  
 With the sweet night to help thy harmony !  
 Thou wilt earn my thanks sure, and perhaps his.

*Callicles*

More than a day and night, Pausanias,  
 Of this fair summer-weather, on these hills,  
 Would I bestow to help Empedocles.  
 That needs no thanks ; one is far better here  
 Than in the broiling city in these heats.  
 But tell me, how hast thou persuaded him  
 In this his present fierce, man-hating mood,  
 To bring thee out with him alone on Etna ?

*Pausanias*

Thou hast heard all men speaking of Pantheia  
 The woman who at Agrigentum lay  
 Thirty long days in a cold trance of death,  
 And whom Empedocles call'd back to life.  
 Thou art too young to note it, but his power  
 Swells with the swelling evil of this time,  
 And holds men mute to see where it will rise.  
 He could stay swift diseases in old days,  
 Chain madmen by the music of his lyre,  
 Cleanse to sweet airs the breath of poisonous streams,  
 And in the mountain-chinks inter the winds.  
 This he could do of old ; but now, since all  
 Clouds and grows daily worse in Sicily,  
 Since broils tear us in twain, since this new swarm  
 Of sophists has got empire in our schools



Where he was paramount, since he is banish'd  
 And lives a lonely man in triple gloom—  
 He grasps the very reins of life and death.  
 I ask'd him of Pantheia yesterday,  
 When we were gather'd with Peisianax,  
 And he made answer, I should come at night  
 On Etna here, and be alone with him,  
 And he would tell me, as his old, tried friend,  
 Who still was faithful, what might profit me ;  
 That is, the secret of this miracle.

*Callicles*

Bah ! Thou a doctor ! Thou art superstitious.  
 Simple Pausanias,' twas no miracle !  
 Pantheia, for I know her kinsmen well,  
 Was subject to these trances from a girl.  
 Empedocles would say so, did he deign ;  
 But he still lets the people, whom he scorns,  
 Gape and cry *wizard* at him, if they list.  
 But thou, thou art no company for him !  
 Thou art as cross, as sour'd as himself !  
 Thou hast some wrong from thine own citizens,  
 And then thy friend is banish'd, and on that,  
 Straightway thou fallest to arraign the times,  
 As if the sky was impious not to fall.  
 The sophists are no enemies of his ;  
 I hear, Gorgias, their chief, speaks nobly of him,  
 As of his gifted master, and once friend.  
 He is too scornful, too high-wrought, too bitter.  
 'Tis not the times, 'tis not the sophists vex him ;  
 There is some root of suffering in himself,  
 Some secret and unfollow'd vein of woe,  
 Which makes the time look black and sad to him.

Pester him not in this his sombre mood  
 With questionings about an idle tale,  
 But lead him through the lovely mountain-paths,  
 And keep his mind from preying on itself,  
 And talk to him of things at hand and common,  
 Not miracles ! thou art a learned man,  
 But credulous of fables as a girl.

*Pausanias*

And thou, a boy whose tongue outruns his knowledge,  
 And on whose lightness blame is thrown away.  
 Enough of this ! I see the litter wind  
 Up by the torrent-side, under the pines.  
 I must rejoin Empedocles. Do thou  
 Crouch in the brushwood till the mules have pass'd ;  
 Then play thy kind part well. Farewell till night !

SCENE II

*Noon. A Glen on the highest skirts of the woody region  
 of Etna.*

EMPEDOCLES—PAUSANIAS

*Pausanias*

The noon is hot. When we have cross'd the stream,  
 We shall have left the woody tract, and come  
 Upon the open shoulder of the hill.  
 See how the giant spires of yellow bloom  
 Of the sun-loving gentian, in the heat,  
 Are shining on those naked slopes like flame !  
 Let us rest here ; and now, Empedocles,  
 Pantheia's history !

[*A harp-note below is heard.*

*Empedocles*

Hark ! what sound was that  
 Rose from below ? If it were possible,  
 And we were not so far from human haunt,  
 I should have said that some one touch'd a harp  
 Hark ! there again !

*Pausanias*

'Tis the boy Callicles,  
 The sweetest harp-player in Catana.  
 He is for ever coming on these hills,  
 In summer, to all country-festivals,  
 With a gay revelling band ; he breaks from them  
 Sometimes, and wanders far among the glens.  
 But heed him not, he will not mount to us ;  
 I spoke with him this morning. Once more, therefore,  
 Instruct me of Pantheia's story, Master,  
 As I have pray'd thee.

*Empedocles*

That ? and to what end ?

*Pausanias*

It is enough that all men speak of it.  
 But I will also say, that when the Gods  
 Visit us as they do with sign and plague,  
 To know those spells of thine which stay their hand  
 Were to live free from terror.

*Empedocles*

Spells ? Mistrust them !

Mind is the spell which governs earth and heaven.  
 Man has a mind with which to plan his safety ;  
 Know that, and help thyself !

*Pausanias*

But thine own words ?  
 "The wit and counsel of man was never clear,  
 Troubles confound the little wit he has."  
 Mind is a light which the Gods mock us with,  
 To lead those false who trust it.

[*The harp sounds again.*

*Empedocles*

Hist ! once more !  
 Listen, Pausanias !—Ay, 'tis Callicles ;  
 I know these notes among a thousand. Hark !

*Callicles*

(*Sings unseen, from below*).

The track winds down to the clear stream,  
 To cross the sparkling shallows ; there  
 The cattle love to gather, on their way  
 To the high mountain-pastures, and to stay,  
 Till the rough cow-herds drive them past,  
 Knee-deep in the cool ford ; for 'tis the last  
 Of all the woody, high, well-water'd dells  
 On Etna ; and the beam  
 Of noon is broken there by chestnut-boughs  
 Down its steep verdant sides ; the air  
 Is freshen'd by the leaping stream, which throws  
 Eternal showers of spray on the moss'd roots

Of trees, and veins of turf, and long dark shoots  
Of ivy-plants, and fragrant hanging bells  
Of hyacinths, and on late anemonies,  
That muffle its wet banks ; but glade,  
And stream, and sward, and chestnut-trees,  
End here ; Etna beyond, in the broad glare  
Of the hot noon, without a shade,  
Slope behind slope, up to the peak, lies bare ;  
The peak, round which the white clouds play.

In such a glen, on such a day,  
On Pelion, on the grassy ground,  
Chiron, the aged Centaur lay,  
The young Achilles standing by.  
The Centaur taught him to explore  
The mountains ; where the glens are dry  
And the tired Centaurs come to rest,  
And where the soaking springs abound  
And the straight ashes grow for spears,  
And where the hill-goats come to feed,  
And the sea-eagles build their nest.  
He show'd him Phthia far away,  
And said : O boy, I taught this lore  
To Peleus, in long distant years !  
He told him of the Gods, the stars,  
The tides ;—and then of mortal wars,  
And of the life which heroes lead  
Before they reach the Elysian place  
And rest in the immortal mead ;  
And all the wisdom of his race.

*The music below ceases, and EMPEDOCLES speaks, accompanying himself in a solemn manner on his harp.*

The out-spread world to span  
 A cord the Gods first slung,  
 And then the soul of man  
 There, like a mirror, hung,  
 And bade the winds through space impel the gusty toy

Hither and thither spins  
 The wind-borne, mirroring soul,  
 A thousand glimpses wins,  
 And never sees a whole ;  
 Looks oncc, and drives elsewhere, and leaves its last employ.

The Gods laugh in their sleeve  
 To watch man doubt and fear,  
 Who knows not what to believe  
 Since he sees nothing clear,  
 And dares stamp nothing false where he finds nothing sure.

Is this, Pausanias, so ?  
 And can our souls not strive,  
 But with the winds must go,  
 And hurry where they drive ?  
 Is fate indeed so strong, man's strength indeed so poor ?

I will not judge. That man,  
 Howbeit, I judge as lost,  
 Whose mind allows a plan,  
 Which would degrade it most ;  
 And he treats doubt the best who tries to see least ill.

Be not, then, fear's blind slave !  
 Thou art my friend ; to thee,  
 All knowledge that I have,  
 All skill I wield, are free.  
 Ask not the latest news of the last miracle,

Ask not what days and nights  
 In trance Pantheia lay,  
 But ask how thou such sights  
 May'st see without dismay ;

Ask what most helps when known, thou son of Anchitus !

What ? hate, and awe, and shame  
 Fill thee to see our time ;  
 Thou feelest thy soul's frame  
 Shaken and out of chime ?

What ? life and chance go hard with thee too, as with us ;

Thy citizens, 'tis said,  
 Envy thee and oppress,  
 Thy goodness no men aid,  
 All strive to make it less ;

Tyranny, pride, and lust, fill Sicily's abodes ;

Heaven is with earth at strife,  
 Signs make thy soul afraid,  
 The dead return to life,  
 Rivers are dried, winds stay'd ;

Scarce can one think in calm, so threatening are the Gods ;

And we feel, day and night,  
 The burden of ourselves—  
 Well, then, the wiser wight  
 In his own bosom delves,

And asks what ails him so, and gets what cure he can.

The sophist sneers : Fool, take  
 Thy pleasure, right or wrong.  
 The pious wail : Forsake  
 A world these sophists throng.

Be neither saint nor sophist-led, but be a man !

These hundred doctors try  
 To preach thee to their school.  
 We have the truth ! they cry ;  
 And yet their oracle,  
 Trumpet it as they will, is but the same as thine.

Once read thy own breast right,  
 And thou hast done with fears ;  
 Man gets no other light,  
 Search he a thousand years.  
 Sink in thyself ! there ask what ails thee, at that shrine !

What makes thee struggle and rave ?  
 Why are men ill at ease ?—  
 'Tis that the lot they have  
 Fails their own will to please ;  
 For man would make no murmuring, were his will obey'd.

And why is it, that still  
 Man with his lot thus fights ?—  
 'Tis that he makes this *will*  
 The measure of his *rights*,  
 And believes Nature outraged if his will's gainsaid.

Couldst thou, Pausanias, learn  
 How deep a fault is this ;  
 Couldst thou but once discern  
 Thou hast no *right* to bliss,  
 No title from the Gods to welfare and repose ;

Then thou wouldst look less mazed  
 Whene'er of bliss debarr'd,  
 Nor think the Gods were crazed  
 When thy own lot went hard.  
 But we are all the same—the fools of our own woes !



For, from the first faint morn  
Of life, the thirst for bliss  
Deep in man's heart is born ;  
And, sceptic as he is,  
He fails not to judge clear if this be quench'd or no.

Nor is the thirst to blame.  
Man errs not that he deems  
His welfare his true aim,  
He errs because he dreams  
The world does but exist that welfare to bestow.

We mortals are no kings  
For each of whom to sway  
A new-made world up-springs,  
Meant merely for his play ;  
No, we are strangers here ; the world is from of old.

In vain our pent wills fret,  
And would the world subdue.  
Limits we did not set  
Condition all we do ;  
Born into life we are, and life must be our mould.

Born into life !—man grows  
Forth from his parents' stem,  
And blends their bloods, as those  
Of theirs are blent in them ;  
So each new man strikes root into a far fore-time.

Born into life !—we bring  
A bias with us here,  
And, when here, each new thing  
Affects us we come near ;  
To tunes we did not call our being must keep chime.

Born into life!—in vain,  
 Opinions, those or these,  
 Unalter'd to retain  
 The obstinate mind decrees ;  
 Experience, like a sea, soaks all-effacing in.

Born into life!—who lists  
 May what is false hold dear,  
 And for himself make mists  
 Through which to see less clear ;  
 The world is what it is, for all our dust and din.

Born into life!—'tis we,  
 And not the world, are new ;  
 Our cry for bliss, our plea,  
 Others have urged it too—  
 Our wants have all been felt, our errors made before.

No eye could be too sound  
 To observe a world so vast,  
 No patience too profound  
 To sort what's here amass'd ;  
 How man may here best live no care too great to explore.

But we—as some rude guest  
 Would change, where'er he roam,  
 The manners there profess'd  
 To those he brings from home—  
 We mark not the world's course, but would have *it* take *ours*.

The world's course proves the terms  
 On which man wins content ;  
 Reason the proof confirms—  
 We spurn it, and invent  
 A false course for the world, and for ourselves, false powers.

Riches we wish to get,  
 Yet remain spendthrifts still ;  
 We would have health, and yet  
 Still use our bodies ill ;

Bafflers of our own prayers, from youth to life's last scenes.

We would have inward peace,  
 Yet will not look within ;  
 We would have misery cease,  
 Yet will not cease from sin ;

We want all pleasant ends, but will use no harsh means ;

We do not what we ought,  
 What we ought not, we do,  
 And lean upon the thought  
 That chance will bring us through ;

But our own acts, for good or ill, are mightier powers.

Yet, even when man forsakes  
 All sin,—is just, is pure,  
 Abandons all which makes  
 His welfare insecure,—

Other existences there are, that clash with ours.

Like us, the lightning-fires  
 Love to have scope and play ;  
 The stream, like us, desires  
 An unimpeded way ;

Like us, the Libyan wind delights to roam at large.

Streams will not curb their pride  
 The just man not to entomb,  
 Nor lightnings go aside  
 To give his virtues room ;

Nor is that wind less rough which blows a good man's barge.

Nature, with equal mind,  
Sees all her sons at play ;  
Sees man control the wind,  
The wind sweep man away ;  
Allows the proudly-riding and the foundering bark.

And, lastly, though of ours  
No weakness spoil our lot,  
Though the non-human powers  
Of Nature harm us not,  
The ill deeds of other men make often *our* life dark.

What were the wise man's plan?—  
Through this sharp, toil-set life,  
To work as best he can,  
And win what's won by strife.—  
But we an easier way to cheat our pains have found.

Scratch'd by a fall, with moans  
As children of weak age  
Lend life to the dumb stones  
Whereon to vent their rage,  
And bend their little fists, and rate the senseless ground ;

So, loath to suffer mute,  
We, peopling the void air,  
Make Gods to whom to impute  
The ills we ought to bear ;  
With God and Fate to rail at, suffering easily.

Yet grant—as sense long miss'd  
Things that are now perceived,  
And much may still exist  
Which is not yet believed—  
Grant that the world were full of Gods we cannot see ;

All things the world which fill  
Of but one stuff are spun,  
That we who rail are still,  
With what we rail at, one ;  
One with the o'erlabour'd Power that through the breadth  
and length

Of earth, and air, and sea,  
In men, and plants, and stones,  
Hath toil perpetually,  
And travails, pants, and moans ;  
Fain would do all things well, but sometimes fails in strength.

And patiently exact  
This universal God  
Alike to any act  
Proceeds at any nod,  
And quietly declaims the cursings of himself.

This is not what man hates,  
Yet he can curse but this.  
Harsh Gods and hostile Fates  
Are dreams ! this only *is*—  
Is everywhere ; sustains the wise, the foolish elf.

Nor only, in the intent  
To attach blame elsewhere,  
Do we at will invent  
Stern Powers who make their care  
To embitter human life, malignant Deities ;

But, next, we would reverse  
The scheme ourselves have spun,  
And what we made to curse  
We now would lean upon,  
And feign kind Gods who perfect what man vainly tries.

Look, the world tempts our eye,  
 And we would know it all !  
 We map the starry sky,  
 We mine this earthen ball,  
 We measure the sea-tides, we number the sea-sands ;  
  
 We scrutinise the dates  
 Of long-past human things,  
 The bounds of effaced states,  
 The lines of deceased kings ;  
 We search out dead men's words, and works of dead men's  
     hands ;  
  
 We shut our eyes, and muse  
 How our own minds are made,  
 What springs of thought they use,  
 How righten'd, how betray'd—  
 And spend our wit to name what most employ unnamed.  
  
 But still, as we proceed  
 The mass swells more and more  
 Of volumes yet to read,  
 Of secrets yet to explore.  
 Our hair grows grey, our eyes are dimm'd, our heat is tamed ;  
  
 We rest our faculties,  
 And thus address the Gods :  
 " True science if there is,  
 It stays in your abodes !  
 Man's measures cannot mete the immeasurable All.  
  
 " You only can take in  
 The world's immense design.  
 Our desperate search was sin,  
 Which henceforth we resign,  
 Sure only that your mind sees all things which befall."

Fools ! That in man's brief term  
He cannot all things view,  
Affords no ground to affirm  
That there are Gods who do ;  
Nor does being weary prove that he has where to rest.

Again.—Our youthful blood  
Claims rapture as its right ;  
The world, a rolling flood  
Of newness and delight,  
Draws in the enamour'd gazer to its shining breast ;

Pleasure, to our hot grasp,  
Gives flowers, after flowers ;  
With passionate warmth we clasp  
Hand after hand in ours ;  
Now do we soon perceive how fast our youth is spent.

At once our eyes grow clear !  
We see, in blank dismay,  
Year posting after year,  
Sense after sense decay ;  
Our shivering heart is mined by secret discontent ;

Yet still, in spite of truth,  
In spite of hopes entomb'd,  
That longing of our youth  
Burns ever unconsumed,  
Still hungrier for delight as delights grow more rare.

We pause ; we hush our heart,  
And thus address the Gods :  
“The world hath fail'd to impart  
The joy our youth forebodes,  
Fail'd to fill up the void which in our breasts we bear.

“Changeful till now, we still  
 Look'd on to something new ;  
 Let us, with changeless will,  
 Henceforth look on to you,  
 To find with you the joy we in vain here require !”

Fools ! That so often here  
 Happiness mock'd our prayer,  
 I think, might make us fear  
 A like event elsewhere ;  
 Make us, not fly to dreams, but moderate desire.

And yet, for those who know  
 Themselves, who wisely take  
 Their way through life, and bow  
 To what they cannot break,  
 Why should I say that life need yield but *moderate* bliss ?

Shall we, with temper spoil'd,  
 Health sapp'd by living ill,  
 And judgment all embroil'd  
 By sadness and self-will,  
 Shall *we* judge what for man is not true bliss or is ?

Is it so small a thing  
 To have enjoy'd the sun,  
 To have lived light in the spring,  
 To have loved, to have thought, to have done ;  
 To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling foes—

That we must feign a bliss  
 Of doubtful future date,  
 And, while we dream on this,  
 Lose all our present state,  
 And relegate to worlds yet distant our repose ?



Not much, I know, you prize  
 What pleasures may be had,  
 Who look on life with eyes  
 Estranged, like mine, and sad ;  
 And yet the village-churl feels the truth more than you,

Who's loath to leave this life  
 Which to him little yields—  
 His hard-task'd sunburnt wife,  
 His often-labour'd fields,  
 The boors with whom he talk'd, the country-spots he knew.

But thou, because thou hear'st  
 Men scoff at Heaven and Fate,  
 Because the Gods thou fear'st  
 Fail to make blest thy state,  
 Tremblest, and wilt not dare to trust the joys there are !

I say : Fear not ! Life still  
 Leaves human effort scope.  
 But, since life teems with ill,  
 Nurse no extravagant hope ;  
 Because thou must not dream, thou need'st not then despair !

*A long pause. At the end of it the notes of a harp  
 below are again heard, and CALLICLES sings :—*

Far, far from here,  
 The Adriatic breaks in a warm bay  
 Among the green Illyrian hills ; and there  
 The sunshine in the happy glens is fair,  
 And by the sea, and in the brakes.  
 The grass is cool, the sea-side air  
 Buoyant and fresh, the mountain flowers  
 More virginal and sweet than ours.

And there, they say, two bright and aged snakes,  
 Who once were Cadmus and Harmonia,  
 Bask in the glens or on the warm sea-shore,  
 In breathless quiet, after all their ills ;  
 Nor do they see their country, nor the place  
 Where the Sphinx lived among the frowning hills,  
 Nor the unhappy palace of their race,  
 Nor Thebes, nor the Ismenus, any more.

There those two live, far in the Illyrian brakes !  
 They had stay'd long enough to see,  
 In Thebes, the billow of calamity  
 Over their own dear children roll'd,  
 Curse upon curse, pang upon pang,  
 For years, they sitting helpless in their home,  
 A grey old man and woman ; yet of old  
 The Gods had to their marriage come,  
 And at the banquet all the Muses sang.

Therefore they did not end their days  
 In sight of blood ; but were rapt, far away,  
 To where the west-wind plays,  
 And murmurs of the Adriatic come  
 To those untrodden mountain-lawns ; and there  
 Placed safely in changed forms, the pair  
 Wholly forget their first sad life, and home,  
 And all that Theban woe, and stray  
 For ever through the glens, placid and dumb.

*Empedocles*

'That was my harp-player again !—where is he ?  
 Down by the stream ?

*Pausanias*

Yes, Master, in the wood.

*Empedocles*

He ever loved the Theban story well !  
 But the day wears. Go now, Pausanias,  
 For I must be alone. Leave me one mule ;  
 Take down with thee the rest to Catana.  
 And for young Callicles, thank him from me ;  
 Tell him, I never fail'd to love his lyre—  
 But he must follow me no more to-night.

*Pausanias*

Thou wilt return to-morrow to the city ?

*Empedocles*

Either to-morrow or some other day,  
 In the sure revolutions of the world,  
 Good friend, I shall revisit Catana.  
 I have seen many cities in my time,  
 Till mine eyes ache with the long spectacle,  
 And I shall doubtless see them all again ;  
 Thou know'st me for a wanderer from of old.  
 Meanwhile, stay me not now. Farewell, Pausanias !

*He departs on his way up the mountain.*

*Pausanias (alone)*

I dare not urge him further—he must go ;  
 But he is strangely wrought !—I will speed back  
 And bring Peisianax to him from the city ;  
 His counsel could once soothe him. But, Apollo !

How his brow lighten'd as the music rose !  
 Callicles must wait here, and play to him ;  
 I saw him through the chestnuts far below,  
 Just since, down at the stream.—Ho ! Callicles !

*He descends, calling.*

ACT II

*Evening. The Summit of Etna.*

EMPEDOCLES

Alone !—

On this charr'd, blacken'd, melancholy waste,  
 Crown'd by the awful peak, Etna's great mouth.  
 Round which the sullen vapour rolls—alone !  
 Pausanias is far hence, and that is well,  
 For I must henceforth speak no more with man  
 He hath his lesson too, and that debt's paid ;  
 And the good, learned, friendly, quiet man,  
 May bravelier front his life, and in himself  
 Find henceforth energy and heart. But I—  
 The weary man, the banish'd citizen,  
 Whose banishment is not his greatest ill,  
 Whose weariness no energy can reach,  
 And for whose hurt courage is not the cure—  
 What should I do with life and living more ?

No, thou art come too late, Empedocles !  
 And the world hath the day, and must break thee,  
 Not thou the world. With men thou canst not live,  
 Their thoughts, their ways, their wishes, are not thine ;  
 And being lonely thou art miserable,  
 For something has impair'd thy spirit's strength,

And dried its self-sufficing fount of joy.  
 Thou canst not live with men nor with thyself—  
 O sage! O sage!—Take then the one way left;  
 And turn thee to the elements, thy friends,  
 Thy well-tried friends, thy willing ministers,  
 And say: Ye helpers, hear Empedocles,  
 Who asks this final service at your hands!  
 Before the sophist-brood hath overlaid  
 The last spark of man's consciousness with words—  
 Ere quite the being of man, ere quite the world  
 Be disarray'd of their divinity—  
 Before the soul lose all her solemn joys,  
 And awe be dead, and hope impossible,  
 And the soul's deep eternal night come on—  
 Receive me, hide me, quench me, take me home!

*He advances to the edge of the crater. Smoke  
 and fire break forth with a loud noise, and  
 CALLICLES is heard below singing:—*

The lyre's voice is lovely everywhere;  
 In the court of Gods, in the city of men,  
 And in the lonely rock-strewn mountain-glen,  
 In the still mountain air.  
 Only to Typho it sounds hatefully;  
 To Typho only, the rebel o'erthrown,  
 Through whose heart Etna drives her roots of stone,  
 To imbed them in the sea.  
 Wherefore dost thou groan so loud?  
 Wherefore do thy nostrils flash,  
 Through the dark night, suddenly,  
 Typho, such red jets of flame?—  
 Is thy tortured heart still proud?

Is thy fire-scathed arm still rash?  
 Still alert thy stone-crush'd frame?  
 Doth thy fierce soul still deplore  
 Thine ancient rout by the Cilician hills,  
 And that curst treachery on the Mount of Gore?<sup>31</sup>  
 Do thy bloodshot eyes still weep  
 The fight which crown'd thine ills,  
 Thy last mischance on this Sicilian deep?  
 Hast thou sworn, in thy sad lair,  
 Where erst the strong sea-currents suck'd thee down,  
 Never to cease to writhe, and try to rest,  
 Letting the sea-stream wander through thy hair?  
 That thy groans, like thunder prest,  
 Begin to roll, and almost drown  
 The sweet notes whose lulling spell  
 Gods and the race of mortals love so well,  
 When through thy caves thou hearest music swell?

But an awful pleasure bland  
 Spreading o'er the Thunderer's face,  
 When the sound climbs near his seat,  
 The Olympian council sees;  
 As he lets his lax right hand,  
 Which the lightnings doth embrace,  
 Sink upon his mighty knees.  
 And the eagle, at the beck  
 Of the appeasing, gracious harmony,  
 Droops all his sheeny, brown, deep-feather'd neck,  
 Nestling nearer to Jove's feet;  
 While o'er his sovran eye  
 The curtains of the blue films slowly meet  
 And the white Olympus-peaks  
 Rosily brighten, and the soothed Gods smile

At one another from their golden chairs,  
 And no one round the charmed circle speaks.  
 Only the loved Hebe bears  
 The cup about, whose draughts beguile  
 Pain and care, with a dark store  
 Of fresh-pull'd violets wreathed and nodding o'er ;  
 And her flush'd feet glow on the marble floor.

*Empedocles*

He fables, yet speaks truth !  
 The brave, impetuous heart yields everywhere  
 To the subtle, contriving head ;  
 Great qualities are trodden down,  
 And littleness united  
 Is become invincible.

These rumblings are not Typho's groans, I know !  
 These angry smoke-bursts  
 Are not the passionate breath  
 Of the mountain-crush'd, tortured, intractable Titan  
           king—

But over all the world  
 What suffering is there not seen  
 Of plainness oppress'd by cunning,  
 As the well-counsell'd Zeus oppress'd  
 That self-helping son of earth !  
 What anguish of greatness,  
 Rail'd and hunted from the world,  
 Because its simplicity rebukes  
 This envious, miserable age !

I am weary of it.  
 —Lie there, ye ensigns  
 Of my unloved preëminence

In an age like this !  
 Among a people of children,  
 Who throng'd me in their cities,  
 Who worshipp'd me in their houses,  
 And ask'd, not wisdom,  
 But drugs to charm with,  
 But spells to mutter—  
 All the fool's-armoury of magic !—Lie there,  
 My golden circlet,  
 My purple robe !

*Callicles (from below)*

As the sky-brightening south-wind clears the day,  
 And makes the mass'd clouds roll,  
 The music of the lyre blows away  
 The clouds which wrap the soul.

Oh ! that Fate had let me see  
 That triumph of the sweet persuasive lyre,  
 That famous, final victory,  
 When jealous Pan with Marsyas did conspire ;  
 When, from far Parnassus' side,  
 Young Apollo, all the pride  
 Of the Phrygian flutes to tame,  
 To the Phrygian highlands came ;  
 Where the long green reed-beds sway  
 In the rippled waters grey  
 Of that solitary lake  
 Where Mæander's springs are born ;  
 Whence the ridged pine-wooded roots  
 Of Messogis westward break,  
 Mounting westward, high and higher.  
 There was held the famous strife ;



There the Phrygian brought his flutes,  
And Apollo brought his lyre ;  
And, when now the westering sun  
Touch'd the hills, the strife was done,  
And the attentive Muses said :  
“ Marsyas, thou art vanquished ! ”  
Then Apollo's minister  
Hang'd upon a branching fir  
Marsyas, that unhappy Faun,  
And began to whet his knife.  
But the Mænads, who were there,  
Left their friend, and with robes flowing  
In the wind, and loose dark hair  
O'er their polish'd bosoms blowing,  
Each her ribbon'd tambourine  
Flinging on the mountain-sod,  
With a lovely frighten'd mien  
Came about the youthful God.  
But he turn'd his beauteous face  
Haughtily another way,  
From the grassy sun-warm'd place  
Where in proud repose he lay,  
With one arm over his head,  
Watching how the whetting sped.

But aloof, on the lake-strand,  
Did the young Olympus stand,  
Weeping at his master's end ;  
For the Faun had been his friend.  
For he taught him how to sing,  
And he taught him flute-playing.  
Many a morning had they gone  
To the glimmering mountain-lakes,

And had torn up by the roots  
 The tall crested water-reeds  
 With long plumes and soft brown seeds,  
 And had carved them into flutes,  
 Sitting on a tabled stone  
 Where the shoreward ripple breaks.  
 And he taught him how to please  
 The red-snooded Phrygian girls,  
 Whom the summer evening sees  
 Flashing in the dance's whirls  
 Underneath the starlit trees  
 In the mountain-villages.  
 Therefore now Olympus stands,  
 At his master's piteous cries  
 Pressing fast with both his hands  
 His white garment to his eyes,  
 Not to see Apollo's scorn ;—  
 Ah, poor Faun, poor Faun ! ah, poor Faun !

*Empedocles*

And lie thou there,  
 My laurel bough !  
 Scornful Apollo's ensign, lie thou there !  
 Though thou hast been my shade in the world's heat—  
 Though I have loved thee, lived in honouring thee—  
 Yet lie thou there,  
 My laurel bough !

I am weary of thee,  
 I am weary of the solitude  
 Where he who bears thee must abide—  
 Of the rocks of Parnassus,  
 Of the rocks of Delphi,

Of the moonlit peaks, and the caves.  
Thou guardest them, Apollo !  
Over the grave of the slain Pytho,  
Though young, intolerably severe !  
Thou keepest aloof the profane,  
But the solitude oppresses thy votary !  
The jars of men reach him not in thy valley—  
But can life reach him ?  
Thou fencest him from the multitude—  
Who will fence him from himself ?  
He hears nothing but the cry of the torrents,  
And the beating of his own heart.  
The air is thin, the veins swell,  
The temples tighten and throb there—  
Air ! air !

Take thy bough, set me free from my solitude ;  
I have been enough alone !

Where shall thy votary fly then ? back to men ?—  
But they will gladly welcome him once more,  
And help him to unbend his too tense thought,  
And rid him of the presence of himself,  
And keep their friendly chatter at his ear,  
And haunt him, till the absence from himself,  
That other torment, grow unbearable ;  
And he will fly to solitude again,  
And he will find its air too keen for him,  
And so change back ; and many thousand times  
Be miserably bandied to and fro  
Like a sea-wave, betwixt the world and thee,  
Thou young, implacable God ! and only death  
Can cut his oscillations short, and so  
Bring him to poise. There is no other way.

And yet what days were those, Parmenides !  
 When we were young, when we could number friends  
 In all the Italian cities like ourselves,  
 When with elated hearts we join'd your train.  
 Ye Sun-born Virgins ! on the road of truth.<sup>32</sup>  
 Then we could still enjoy, then neither thought  
 Nor outward things were closed and dead to us ;  
 But we received the shock of mighty thoughts  
 On simple minds with a pure natural joy ;  
 And if the sacred load oppress'd our brain,  
 We had the power to feel the pressure eased,  
 The brow unbound, the thoughts flow free again,  
 In the delightful commerce of the world.  
 We had not lost our balance then, nor grown  
 Thought's slaves, and dead to every natural joy.  
 The smallest thing could give us pleasure then—  
 The sports of the country-people,  
 A flute-note from the woods,  
 Sunset over the sea ;  
 Seed-time and harvest,  
 The reapers in the corn,  
 The vinedresser in his vineyard,  
 The village-girl at her wheel.

Fulness of life and power of feeling, ye  
 Are for the happy, for the souls at ease,  
 Who dwell on a firm basis of content !  
 But he, who has outlived his prosperous days—  
 But he, whose youth fell on a different world  
 From that on which his exiled age is thrown—  
 Whose mind was fed on other food, was train'd  
 By other rules than are in vogue to-day—  
 Whose habit of thought is fix'd, who will not change,

But, in a world he loves not, must subsist  
 In ceaseless opposition, be the guard  
 Of his own breast, fetter'd to what he guards,  
 That the world win no mastery over him—  
 Who has no friend, no fellow left, not one ;  
 Who has no minute's breathing space allow'd  
 To nurse his dwindling faculty of joy——  
 Joy and the outward world must die to him,  
 As they are dead to me.

*A long pause, during which EMPEDOCLES remains motionless, plunged in thought. The night deepens. He moves forward and gazes round him, and proceeds :—*

And you, ye stars,  
 Who slowly begin to marshal,  
 As of old, in the fields of heaven,  
 Your distant, melancholy lines !  
 Have you, too, survived yourselves ?  
 Are you, too, what I fear to become ?  
 You, too, once lived ;  
 You too moved joyfully  
 Among august companions,  
 In an older world, peopled by Gods,  
 In a mightier order,  
 The radiant, rejoicing, intelligent Sons of Heaven.  
 But now, ye kindle  
 Your lonely, cold-shining lights,  
 Unwilling lingerers  
 In the heavenly wilderness,  
 For a younger, ignoble world ;  
 And renew, by necessity,  
 Night after night your courses,

In echoing, unneer'd silence,  
 Above a race you know not—  
 Uncaring and undelighted,  
 Without friend and without home ;  
 Weary like us, though not  
 Weary with our weariness.

No, no, ye stars ! there is no death with you,  
 No languor, no decay ! languor and death,  
 They are with me, not you ! ye are alive—  
 Ye, and the pure dark ether where ye ride  
 Brilliant above me ! And thou, fiery world,  
 That sapp'st the vitals of this terrible mount  
 Upon whose charr'd and quaking crust I stand—  
 Thou, too, brimmet with life !—the sea of cloud,  
 That heaves its white and billowy vapours up  
 To moat this isle of ashes from the world,  
 Lives ; and that other fainter sea, far down,  
 O'er whose lit floor a road of moonbeams leads  
 To Etna's Liparëan sister-fires  
 And the long dusky line of Italy—  
 That mild and luminous floor of waters lives,  
 With held-in joy swelling its heart ; I only,  
 Whose spring of hope is dried, whose spirit has fail'd,  
 I, who have not, like these, in solitude  
 Maintain'd courage and force, and in myself  
 Nursed an immortal vigour—I alone  
 Am dead to life and joy, therefore I read  
 In all things my own deadness.

*A long silence. He continues :—*

Oh, that I could glow like this mountain !  
 Oh, that my heart bounded with the swell of the sea !

Oh, that my soul were full of light as the stars !  
 Oh, that it brooded over the world like the air !

But no, this heart will glow no more ; thou art  
 A living man no more, Empedocles !  
 Nothing but a devouring flame of thought—  
 But a naked, eternally restless mind !

*After a pause :—*

To the elements it came from  
 Everything will return—  
 Our bodies to earth,  
 Our blood to water,  
 Heat to fire,  
 Breath to air.  
 They were well born, they will be well entomb'd—  
 But mind? . . .

And we might gladly share the fruitful stir  
 Down in our mother earth's miraculous womb ;  
 Well would it be  
 With what roll'd of us in the stormy main ;  
 We might have joy, blent with the all-bathing air,  
 Or with the nimble, radiant life of fire.

But mind, but thought—  
 If these have been the master part of us—  
 Where will *they* find their parent element ?  
 What will receive *them*, who will call *them* home ?  
 But we shall still be in them, and they in us,  
 And we shall be the strangers of the world,  
 And they will be our lords, as they are now ;  
 And keep us prisoners of our consciousness,  
 And never let us clasp and feel the All  
 But through their forms, and modes, and stifling veils.

And we shall be unsatisfied as now ;  
And we shall feel the agony of thirst,  
The ineffable longing for the life of life  
Baffled for ever ; and still thought and mind  
Will hurry us with them on their homeless march,  
Over the unallied unopening earth,  
Over the unrecognising sea ; while air  
Will blow us fiercely back to sea and earth,  
And fire repel us from its living waves.  
And then we shall unwillingly return  
Back to this meadow of calamity,  
This uncongenial place, this human life ;  
And in our individual human state  
Go through the sad probation all again,  
To see if we will poise our life at last,  
To see if we will now at last be true  
To our own only true, deep-buried selves,  
Being one with which we are one with the whole world ;  
Or whether we will once more fall away  
Into some bondage of the flesh or mind,  
Some slough of sense, or some fantastic maze  
Forged by the imperious lonely thinking-power.  
And each succeeding age in which we are born  
Will have more peril for us than the last ;  
Will goad our senses with a sharper spur,  
Will fret our minds to an intenser play,  
Will make ourselves harder to be discern'd.  
And we shall struggle awhile, gasp and rebel—  
And we shall fly for refuge to past times,  
Their soul of unworn youth, their breath of greatness,  
And the reality will pluck us back,  
Knead us in its hot hand, and change our nature  
And we shall feel our powers of effort flag,



And rally them for one last fight—and fail ;  
 And we shall sink in the impossible strife,  
 And be astray for ever.

Slave of sense

I have in no wise been ;—but slave of thought ? . . .  
 And who can say : I have been always free,  
 Lived ever in the light of my own soul ?—  
 I cannot ; I have lived in wrath and gloom,  
 Fierce, disputatious, ever at war with man,  
 Far from my own soul, far from warmth and light  
 But I have not grown easy in these bonds—  
 But I have not denied what bonds these were.  
 Yea, I take myself to witness,  
 That I have loved no darkness,  
 Sophisticated no truth,  
 Nursed no delusion,  
 Allow'd no fear !

And therefore, O ye elements ! I know—  
 Ye know it too—it hath been granted me  
 Not to die wholly, not to be all enslaved.  
 I feel it in this hour. The numbing cloud  
 Mounts off my soul ; I feel it, I breathe free.

Is it but for a moment ?  
 —Ah, boil up, ye vapours !  
 Leap and roar, thou sea of fire !  
 My soul glows to meet you.  
 Ere it flag, ere the mists  
 Of despondency and gloom  
 Rush over it again,  
 Receive me, save me !

[*He plunges into the crater.*]

*Calicles**(from below)*

Through the black, rushing smoke-bursts,  
Thick breaks the red flame ;  
All Etna heaves fiercely  
Her forest-clothed frame.

Not here, O Apollo !  
Are haunts meet for thee.  
But, where Helicon breaks down  
In cliff to the sea,

Where the moon-silver'd inlets  
Send far their light voice  
Up the still vale of Thisbe,  
O speed, and rejoice !

On the sward at the cliff-top  
Lie strewn the white flocks,  
On the cliff-side the pigeons  
Roost deep in the rocks.

In the moonlight the shepherds,  
Soft lull'd by the rills,  
Lie wrapt in their blankets  
Asleep on the hills.

—What forms are these coming  
So white through the gloom ?  
What garments out-glistening  
The gold-flower'd broom ?

What sweet-breathing presence  
Out-perfumes the thyme ?  
What voices enrapture  
The night's balmy prime ?—

'Tis Apollo comes leading  
His choir, the Nine.  
—The leader is fairest,  
But all are divine.

They are lost in the hollows !  
They stream up again !  
What seeks on this mountain  
The glorified train ?—

They bathe on this mountain,  
In the spring by their road ;  
Then on to Olympus,  
Their endless abode.

—Whose praise do they mention ?  
Of what is it told ?—  
What will be for ever ;  
What was from of old.

First hymn they the Father  
Of all things ; and then,  
The rest of immortals,  
The action of men.

The day in his hotness,  
The strife with the palm ;  
The night in her silence,  
The stars in their calm.



LATER POEMS



## WESTMINSTER ABBEY

JULY 25, 1881.

(*The Day of Burial, in the Abbey, of* ARTHUR PENRHYN  
STANLEY, *Dean of Westminster.*)

WHAT! for a term so scant  
Our shining visitant  
Cheer'd us, and now is pass'd into the night?  
    Couldst thou no better keep, O Abbey old,  
    The boon thy dedication-sign foretold,<sup>33</sup>  
The presence of that gracious inmate, light?—  
    A child of light appear'd;  
Hither he came, late-born and long-desired,  
    And to men's hearts this ancient place endear'd;  
What, is the happy glow so soon expired?

—Rough was the winter eve;  
    Their craft the fishers leave,  
And down over the Thames the darkness drew.  
    One still lags last, and turns, and eyes the Pile  
    Huge in the gloom, across in Thorney Isle,  
King Sebert's work, the wondrous Minster new.  
    —'Tis Lambeth now, where then  
They moor'd their boats among the bulrush stems;  
    And that new Minster in the matted fen  
The world-famed Abbey by the westering Thames.

His mates are gone, and he  
 For mist can scarcely see  
 A strange wayfarer coming to his side—  
 Who bade him loose his boat, and fix his oar,  
 And row him straightway to the further shore,  
 And wait while he did there a space abide.  
 The fisher awed obeys,  
 That voice had note so clear of sweet command ;  
 Through pouring tide he pulls, and drizzling haze,  
 And sets his freight ashore on Thorney strand.

The Minster's outlined mass  
 Rose dim from the morass,  
 And thitherward the stranger took his way.  
 Lo, on a sudden all the Pile is bright !  
 Nave, choir and transept glorified with light,  
 While tongues of fire on coign and carving play !  
 And heavenly odours fair  
 Come streaming with the floods of glory in,  
 And carols float along the happy air,  
 As if the reign of joy did now begin.

Then all again is dark ;  
 And by the fisher's bark  
 The unknown passenger returning stands.  
*O Saxon fisher ! thou hast had with thee  
 The fisher from the Lake of Galilee—*  
 So saith he, blessing him with outspread hands ;  
 Then fades, but speaks the while :  
*At dawn thou to King Sebert shalt relate  
 How his St. Peter's Church in Thorney Isle  
 Peter, his friend, with light did consecrate.*



Twelve hundred years and more  
 Along the holy floor  
 Pageants have pass'd, and tombs of mighty kings  
 Efface the humbler graves of Sebert's line,  
 And, as years sped, the minster-aisles divine  
 Grew used to the approach of Glory's wings.  
 Arts came, and arms, and law,  
 And majesty, and sacred form and fear ;  
 Only that primal guest the fisher saw,  
 Light, only light, was slow to reappear.

The Saviour's happy light,  
 Wherein at first was dight  
 His boon of life and immortality,  
 In desert ice of subtleties was spent  
 Or drown'd in mists of childish wonderment,  
 Fond fancies here, there false philosophy !  
 And harsh the temper grew  
 Of men with mind thus darken'd and astray ;  
 And scarce the boon of life could struggle  
 through,  
 For want of light which should the boon convey.

Yet in this latter time  
 The promise of the prime  
 Seem'd to come true at last, O Abbey old !  
 It seem'd, a child of light did bring the dower  
 Foreshown thee in thy consecration-hour,  
 And in thy courts his shining freight unroll'd :  
 Bright wits, and instincts sure,  
 And goodness warm, and truth without alloy,  
 And temper sweet, and love of all things pure,  
 And joy in light, and power to spread the joy.

And on that countenance bright  
 Shone oft so high a light,  
 That to my mind there came how, long ago,  
 Lay on the hearth, amid a fiery ring,  
 The charm'd babe of the Eleusinian king—<sup>34</sup>  
 His nurse, the Mighty Mother, will'd it so.  
 Warm in her breast, by day,  
 He slumber'd, and ambrosia balm'd the child ;  
 But all night long amid the flames he lay,  
 Upon the hearth, and play'd with them, and smiled.

But once, at midnight deep,  
 His mother woke from sleep,  
 And saw her babe amidst the fire, and scream'd.  
 A sigh the Goddess gave, and with a frown  
 Pluck'd from the fire the child, and laid him down ;  
 Then raised her face, and glory round her stream'd.  
 The mourning-stole no more  
 Mantled her form, no more her head was bow'd ;  
 But raiment of celestial sheen she wore,  
 And beauty fill'd her, and she spake aloud :—

“ O ignorant race of man !  
 Achieve your good who can,  
 If your own hands the good begun undo ?  
 Had human cry not marr'd the work divine,  
 Immortal had I made this boy of mine ;  
 But now his head to death again is due  
 And I have now no power  
 Unto this pious household to repay  
 Their kindness shown me in my wandering  
 hour.”  
 —She spake, and from the portal pass'd away.

The Boy his nurse forgot,  
And bore a mortal lot.

Long since, his name is heard on earth no more.

In some chance battle on Cithæron-side  
The nursling of the Mighty Mother died,  
And went where all his fathers went before.

—On thee too, in thy day  
Of childhood, Arthur ! did some check have power,  
That, radiant though thou wert, thou couldst  
but stay,  
Bringer of heavenly light, a human hour ?

Therefore our happy guest  
Knew care, and knew unrest,  
And weakness warn'd him, and he fear'd decline.  
And in the grave he laid a cherish'd wife,  
And men ignoble harass'd him with strife,  
And deadly airs his strength did undermine.

Then from his Abbey fades  
The sound beloved of his victorious breath ;  
And light's fair nursling stupor first invades,  
And next the crowning impotence of death.

But hush ! This mournful strain,  
Which would of death complain,  
The oracle forbade, not ill-inspired.—  
That Pair, whose head did plan, whose hands did  
forge

The Temple in the pure Parnassian gorge,<sup>35</sup>  
Finish'd their work, and then a meed required.

“Seven days,” the God replied,  
“Live happy, then expect your perfect meed !”

Quiet in sleep, the seventh night, they died.  
Death, death was judged the boon supreme indeed.

And truly he who here  
 Hath run his bright career,  
 And served men nobly, and acceptance found,  
 And borne to light and right his witness high,  
 What could he better wish than then to die,  
 And wait the issue, sleeping underground?  
 Why should he pray to range  
 Down the long age of truth that ripens slow;  
 And break his heart with all the baffling change,  
 And all the tedious tossing to and fro?

For this and that way swings  
 The flux of mortal things,  
 Though moving inly to one far-set goal.—  
 What had our Arthur gain'd, to stop and see,  
 After light's term, a term of cecity,  
 A Church once large and then grown strait in soul?  
 To live, and see arise,  
 Alternating with wisdom's too short reign,  
 Folly revived, re-furbish'd sophistries,  
 And pullulating rites externe and vain?

Ay me! 'Tis deaf, that ear  
 Which joy'd my voice to hear;  
 Yet would I not disturb thee from thy tomb,  
 Thus sleeping in thine Abbey's friendly shade,  
 And the rough waves of life for ever laid!  
 I would not break thy rest, nor change thy doom.  
 Even as my father, thou—  
 Even as that loved, that well-recorded friend—  
 Hast thy commission done; ye both may now  
 Wait for the leaven to work, the let to end.

And thou, O Abbey grey!  
 Predestined to the ray  
 By this dear guest over thy precinct shed—  
 Fear not but that thy light once more shall burn,  
 Once more thine immemorial gleam return,  
 Though sunk be now this bright, this gracious head!  
 Let but the light appear  
 And thy transfigured walls be touch'd with flame—  
 Our Arthur will again be present here,  
 Again from lip to lip will pass his name.

## GEIST'S GRAVE

FOUR years!—and didst thou stay above  
 The ground, which hides thee now, but four?  
 And all that life, and all that love,  
 Were crowded, Geist! into no more?

Only four years those winning ways,  
 Which make me for thy presence yearn,  
 Call'd us to pet thee or to praise,  
 Dear little friend! at every turn?

That loving heart, that patient soul,  
 Had they indeed no longer span,  
 To run their course, and reach their goal,  
 And read their homily to man?

That liquid, melancholy eye,  
 From whose pathetic, soul-fed springs  
 Seem'd surging the Virgilian cry,\*  
 The sense of tears in mortal things—

\* *Sunt lacrimæ rerum!*

That steadfast, mournful strain, consoled  
 By spirits gloriously gay,  
 And temper of heroic mould—  
 What, was four years their whole short day?

Yes, only four!—and not the course  
 Of all the centuries yet to come,  
 And not the infinite resource  
 Of Nature, with her countless sum

Of figures, with her fulness vast  
 Of new creation evermore,  
 Can ever quite repeat the past,  
 Or just thy little self restore.

Stern law of every mortal lot!  
 Which man, proud man, finds hard to bear,  
 And builds himself I know not what  
 Of second life I know not where.

But thou, when struck thine hour to go,  
 On us, who stood despondent by,  
 A meek last glance of love didst throw,  
 And humbly lay thee down to die.

Yet would we keep thee in our heart—  
 Would fix our favourite on the scene,  
 Nor let thee utterly depart  
 And be as if thou ne'er hadst been.

And so there rise these lines of verse  
 On lips that rarely form them now;  
 While to each other we rehearse:  
*Such ways, such arts, such looks hadst thou!*

We stroke thy broad brown paws again,  
We bid thee to thy vacant chair,  
We greet thee by the window-pane,  
We hear thy scuffle on the stair.

We see the flaps of thy large ears  
Quick raised to ask which way we go ;  
Crossing the frozen lake, appears  
Thy small black figure on the snow !

Nor to us only art thou dear  
Who mourn thee in thine English home ;  
Thou hast thine absent master's tear,  
Dropt by the far Australian foam.

Thy memory lasts both here and there,  
And thou shalt live as long as we.  
And after that—thou dost not care !  
In us was all the world to thee.

Yet, fondly zealous for thy fame,  
Even to a date beyond our own  
We strive to carry down thy name,  
By mounded turf, and graven stone.

We lay thee, close within our reach,  
Here, where the grass is smooth and warm,  
Between the holly and the beech,  
Where oft we watch'd thy couchant form,

Asleep, yet lending half an ear  
To travellers on the Portsmouth road ;—  
There build we thee, O guardian dear,  
Mark'd with a stone, thy last abode !

Then some, who through this garden pass,  
 When we too, like thyself, are clay,  
 Shall see thy grave upon the grass,  
 And stop before the stone, and say :

*People who lived here long ago  
 Did by this stone, it seems, intend  
 To name for future times to know  
 The dachs-hound, Geist, their little friend.*

### POOR MATTHIAS

POOR MATTHIAS !—Found him lying  
 Fall'n beneath his perch and dying ?  
 Found him stiff, you say, though warm—  
 All convulsed his little form ?  
 Poor canary ! many a year  
 Well he knew his mistress dear ;  
 Now in vain you call his name,  
 Vainly raise his rigid frame,  
 Vainly warm him in your breast,  
 Vainly kiss his golden crest,  
 Smooth his ruffled plumage fine,  
 Touch his trembling beak with wine.  
 One more gasp—it is the end !  
 Dead and mute our tiny friend !  
 —Songster thou of many a year,  
 Now thy mistress brings thee here,  
 Says, it fits that I rehearse,  
 Tribute due to thee, a verse,  
 Meed for daily song of yore  
 Silent now for evermore.



Poor Matthias ! Wouldst thou have  
More than pity ? claim'st a stave ?  
—Friends more near us than a bird  
We dismiss'd without a word.  
Rover, with the good brown head,  
Great Atossa, they are dead ;  
Dead, and neither prose nor rhyme  
Tells the praises of their prime.  
Thou didst know them old and grey,  
Know them in their sad decay.  
Thou hast seen Atossa sage  
Sit for hours beside thy cage ;  
Thou wouldst chirp, thou foolish bird,  
Flutter, chirp—she never stirr'd !  
What were now these toys to her ?  
Down she sank amid her fur ;  
Eyed thee with a soul resign'd—  
And thou deemedst cats were kind !  
—Cruel, but composed and bland,  
Dumb, inscrutable and grand,  
So Tiberius might have sat,  
Had Tiberius been a cat.

Rover died—Atossa too.  
Less than they to us are you !  
Nearer human were their powers,  
Closer knit their life with ours.  
Hands had stroked them, which are cold,  
Now for years, in churchyard mould ;  
Comrades of our past were they,  
Of that unreturning day.  
Changed and aging, they and we  
Dwelt, it seem'd, in sympathy.

Always from their presence broke  
 Somewhat which remembrance woke  
 Of the loved, the lost, the young—  
 Yet they died, and died unsung.

Geist came next, our little friend ;  
 Geist had verse to mourn his end.  
 Yes, but that enforcement strong  
 Which compell'd for Geist a song—  
 All that gay courageous cheer,  
 All that human pathos dear ;  
 Soul-fed eyes with suffering worn,  
 Pain heroically borne,  
 Faithful love in depth divine—  
 Poor Matthias, were they thine ?

Max and Kaiser we to-day  
 Greet upon the lawn at play ;  
 Max a dachshound without blot—  
 Kaiser should be, but is not.  
 Max, with shining yellow coat,  
 Prinking ears and dewlap throat—  
 Kaiser, with his collie face,  
 Penitent for want of race.  
 —Which may be the first to die,  
 Vain to augur, they or I !  
 But, as age comes on, I know,  
 Poet's fire gets faint and low ;  
 If so be that travel they  
 First the inevitable way,  
 Much I doubt if they shall have  
 Dirge from me to crown their grave.

Yet, poor bird, thy tiny corse  
 Moves me, somehow, to remorse ;

Something haunts my conscience, brings  
Sad, compunctious visitings.  
Other favourites, dwelling here,  
Open lived to us, and near ;  
Well we knew when they were glad,  
Plain we saw if they were sad,  
Joy'd with them when they were gay,  
Soothed them in their last decay ;  
Sympathy could feel and show  
Both in weal of theirs and woe.

Birds, companions more unknown,  
Live beside us, but alone ;  
Finding not, do all they can,  
Passage from their souls to man.  
Kindness we bestow, and praise,  
Laud their plumage, greet their lays ;  
Still, beneath their feather'd breast,  
Stirs a history unexpress'd.  
Wishes there, and feelings strong,  
Incommunicably throng ;  
What they want, we cannot guess,  
Fail to track their deep distress—  
Dull look on when death is nigh,  
Note no change, and let them die.  
Poor Matthias ! couldst thou speak,  
What a tale of thy last week !  
Every morning did we pay  
Stupid salutations gay,  
Suited well to health, but how  
Mocking, how incongruous now !  
Cake we offer'd, sugar, seed,  
Never doubtful of thy need ;

Praised, perhaps, thy courteous eye,  
 Praised thy golden livery.  
 Gravely thou the while, poor dear !  
 Sat'st upon thy perch to hear,  
 Fixing with a mute regard  
 Us, thy human keepers hard,  
 Troubling, with our chatter vain,  
 Ebb of life, and mortal pain—  
 Us, unable to divine  
 Our companion's dying sign,  
 Or o'erpass the severing sea  
 Set betwixt ourselves and thee,  
 Till the sand thy feathers smirch  
 Fallen dying off thy perch !

Was it, as the Grecian sings,  
 Birds were born the first of things,  
 Before the sun, before the wind,  
 Before the gods, before mankind,  
 Airy, ante-mundane throng—  
 Witness their unworldly song !  
 Proof they give, too, primal powers,  
 Of a prescience more than ours—  
 Teach us, while they come and go,  
 When to sail, and when to sow.  
 Cuckoo calling from the hill,  
 Swallow skimming by the mill,  
 Swallows trooping in the sedge,  
 Starlings swirling from the hedge,  
 Mark the seasons, map our year,  
 As they show and disappear.  
 But, with all this travail sage  
 Brought from that anterior age,

Goes an unreversed decree  
 Whereby strange are they and we ,  
 Making want of theirs, and plan,  
 Indiscernible by man.

No, away with tales like these  
 Stol'n from Aristophanes !<sup>36</sup>  
 Does it, if we miss your mind,  
 Prove us so remote in kind ?  
 Birds ! we but repeat on you  
 What amongst ourselves we do.  
 Somewhat more or somewhat less,  
 'Tis the same unskilfulness.  
 What you feel, escapes our ken—  
 Know we more our fellow men ?  
 Human suffering at our side,  
 Ah, like yours is undescried !  
 Human longings, human fears,  
 Miss our eyes and miss our ears.  
 Little helping, wounding much,  
 Dull of heart, and hard of touch,  
 Brother man's despairing sign  
 Who may trust us to divine ?  
 Who assure us, sundering powers  
 Stand not 'twixt his soul and ours ?

Poor Matthias ! See, thy end  
 What a lesson doth it lend !  
 For that lesson thou shalt have,  
 Dead canary bird, a stave !  
 Telling how, one stormy day,  
 Stress of gale and showers of spray  
 Drove my daughter small and me  
 Inland from the rocks and sea.

Driv'n inshore, we follow down  
Ancient streets of Hastings town—  
Slowly thread them—when behold,  
French canary-merchant old  
Shepherding his flock of gold  
In a low dim-lighted pen  
Scann'd of tramps and fishermen !  
There a bird, high-coloured, fat,  
Proud of port, though something squat—  
Pursy, play'd-out Philistine—  
Dazzled Nelly's youthful eyne.  
But, far in, obscure, there stirr'd  
On his perch a sprightlier bird,  
Courteous-eyed, erect and slim ;  
And I whisper'd : “ Fix on *him!*”  
Home we brought him, young and fair,  
Songs to trill in Surrey air.  
Here Matthias sang his fill,  
Saw the cedars of Pains Hill ;  
Here he pour'd his little soul,  
Heard the murmur of the Mole.  
Eight in number now the years  
He hath pleased our eyes and ears ;  
Other favourites he hath known  
Go, and now himself is gone.  
—Fare thee well, companion dear !  
Fare for ever well, nor fear,  
'Tiny though thou art, to stray  
Down the uncompanion'd way !  
We without thee, little friend,  
Many years have not to spend ;  
What are left, will hardly be  
Better than we spent with thee.

## KAISER DEAD

*April 6, 1887.*

WHAT, Kaiser dead? The heavy news  
 Post-haste to Cobham calls the Muse,  
 From where in Farringford she brews  
     The ode sublime,  
 Or with Pen-bryn's bold bard pursues  
     A rival rhyme.

Kai's bracelet tail, Kai's busy feet,  
 Were known to all the village-street.  
 "What, poor Kai dead?" say all I meet;  
     "A loss indeed!"  
 O for the croon pathetic, sweet,  
     Of Robin's reed!<sup>37</sup>

Six years ago I brought him down,  
 A baby dog, from London town;  
 Round his small throat of black and brown  
     A ribbon blue,  
 And vouch'd by glorious renown  
     A dachshound true.

His mother, most majestic dame,  
 Of blood-unmix'd, from Potsdam came;  
 And Kaiser's race we deem'd the same—  
     No lineage higher.  
 And so he bore the imperial name.  
     But ah, his sire!

Soon, soon the days conviction bring.  
 The collie hair, the collie swing,

The tail's indomitable ring,  
     The eye's unrest—  
 The case was clear ; a mongrel thing  
     Kai stood confest.

But all those virtues, which commend  
 The humbler sort who serve and tend,  
 Were thine in store, thou faithful friend.  
     What sense, what cheer !  
 To us, declining tow'rds our end,  
     A mate how dear !

For Max, thy brother-dog, began  
 To flag, and feel his narrowing span.  
 And cold, besides, his blue blood ran,  
     Since, 'gainst the classes,  
 He heard, of late, the Grand Old Man  
     Incite the masses.

Yes, Max and we grew slow and sad ;  
 But Kai, a tireless shepherd-lad,  
 Teeming with plans, alert, and glad  
     In work or play,  
 Like sunshine went and came, and bade  
     Live out the day !

Still, still I see the figure smart—  
 Trophy in mouth, agog to start,  
 Then, home return'd, once more depart ;  
     Or prest together  
 Against thy mistress, loving heart,  
     In winter weather.

I see the tail, like bracelet twirl'd,  
 In moments of disgrace uncurl'd,



Then at a pardoning word re-furl'd,  
 A conquering sign ;  
 Crying, " Come on, and range the world,  
 And never pine."

Thine eye was bright, thy coat it shone ;  
 Thou hadst thine errands, off and on ;  
 In joy thy last morn flew ; anon,  
 A fit ! All's over ;  
 And thou art gone where Geist hath gone,  
 And Toss, and Rover.

Poor Max, with downcast, reverent head,  
 Regards his brother's form outspread ;  
 Full well Max knows the friend is dead  
 Whose cordial talk,  
 And jokes in doggish language said,  
 Beguiled his walk.

And Glory, stretch'd at Burwood gate,  
 Thy passing by doth vainly wait ;  
 And jealous Jock, thy only hate,  
 The chiel from Skye,  
 Lets from his shaggy Highland pate  
 Thy memory die.

Well, fetch his graven collar fine,  
 And rub the steel, and make it shine,  
 And leave it round thy neck to twine,  
 Kai, in thy grave.  
 There of thy master keep that sign,  
 And this plain stave.



## NOTES



## NOTES

### NOTE 1, PAGE 2.

*Savē The Wide Prospect, and the Asian Fen.*

THE name Europe (Εὐρώπη, *the wide prospect*) probably describes the appearance of the European coast to the Greeks on the coast of Asia Minor opposite. The name Asia, again, comes, it has been thought, from the muddy fens of the rivers of Asia Minor, such as the Cayster or Mæander, which struck the imagination of the Greeks living near them.

### NOTE 2, PAGE 8.

*Mycerinus.*

“After Chephren, Mycerinus, son of Cheops, reigned over Egypt. He abhorred his father’s courses, and judged his subjects more justly than any of their kings had done.—To him there came an oracle from the city of Buto, to the effect that he was to live but six years longer, and to die in the seventh year from that time.”—HERODOTUS.

### NOTE 3, PAGE 38.

*Stagirius.*

Stagirius was a young monk to whom St. Chrysostom addressed three books, and of whom those books give an account. They will be found in the first volume of the Benedictine edition of St. Chrysostom’s works.

### NOTE 4, PAGE 47.

*Horatian Echo.*

Written in 1847. Printed by permission of Mr. Arthur Galton, to whom the Poem was given in 1886 for publication in *The Hobby Horse*.

## NOTE 5, PAGE 54.

*That wayside inn we left to-day.*

Those who have been long familiar with the English Lake-Country will find no difficulty in recalling, from the description in the text, the roadside inn at Wythburn on the descent from Dunmail Raise towards Keswick ; its sedentary landlord of thirty years ago, and the passage over the Wythburn Fells to Watendlath.

## NOTE 6, PAGE 65.

*Sohrab and Rustum.*

The story of Sohrab and Rustum is told in Sir John Malcolm's *History of Persia*, as follows :—

“The young Sohrab was the fruit of one of Rustum's early amours. He had left his mother, and sought fame under the banners of Afrasiab, whose armies he commanded, and soon obtained a renown beyond that of all contemporary heroes but his father. He had carried death and dismay into the ranks of the Persians, and had terrified the boldest warriors of that country, before Rustum encountered him, which at last that hero resolved to do, under a feigned name. They met three times. The first time they parted by mutual consent, though Sohrab had the advantage ; the second, the youth obtained a victory, but granted life to his unknown father ; the third was fatal to Sohrab, who, when writhing in the pangs of death, warned his conqueror to shun the vengeance that is inspired by parental woes, and bade him dread the rage of the mighty Rustum, who must soon learn that he had slain his son Sohrab. These words, we are told, were as death to the aged hero ; and when he recovered from a trance, he called in despair for proofs of what Sohrab had said. The afflicted and dying youth tore open his mail, and showed his father a seal which his mother had placed on his arm when she discovered to him the secret of his birth, and bade him seek his father. The sight of his own signet rendered Rustum quite frantic ; he cursed himself, attempting to put an end to his existence, and was only prevented by the efforts of his expiring son. After Sohrab's death, he burnt his tents and all his goods, and carried the corpse to Seistan, where it was interred ; the army of Turan was, agreeably to the last request of Sohrab, permitted to cross the Oxus unmolested. To reconcile us to the improbability of this tale, we are informed that Rustum could have no idea his son was in existence. The mother of Sohrab had written to him her child was a daughter, fearing to lose her darling infant if she revealed the truth ; and Rustum, as before stated, fought under a feigned name, an usage not uncommon in the chivalrous combats of those days.”

## NOTE 7, PAGE 101.

*Balder Dead.*

“Balder the Good having been tormented with terrible dreams, indicating that his life was in great peril, communicated them to the assembled Æsir, who resolved to conjure all things to avert from him the threatened danger. Then Frigga exacted an oath from fire and water, from iron, and all other metals, as well as from stones, earths, diseases, beasts, birds, poisons, and creeping things, that none of them would do any harm to Balder. When this was done, it became a favourite pastime of the Æsir, at their meetings, to get Balder to stand up and serve them as a mark, some hurling darts at him, some stones, while others hewed at him with their swords and battle-axes, for do what they would, none of them could harm him, and this was regarded by all as a great honour shown to Balder. But when Loki beheld the scene he was sorely vexed that Balder was not hurt. Assuming, therefore, the shape of a woman, he went to Fensalir, the mansion of Frigga. That goddess, when she saw the pretended woman, inquired of her if she knew what the Æsir were doing at their meetings. She replied, that they were throwing darts and stones at Balder without being able to hurt him.

“‘Ay,’ said Frigga, ‘neither metal nor wood can hurt Balder, for I have exacted an oath from all of them.’

“‘What!’ exclaimed the woman, ‘have all things sworn to spare Balder?’

“‘All things,’ replied Frigga, ‘except one little shrub that grows on the eastern side of Valhalla, and is called Mistletoe, and which I thought too young and feeble to crave an oath from.’

“As soon as Loki heard this he went away, and, resuming his natural shape, cut off the mistletoe, and repaired to the place where the gods were assembled. There he found Hödur standing apart, without partaking of the sports, on account of his blindness, and going up to him said, ‘Why dost thou not also throw something at Balder?’

“‘Because I am blind,’ answered Hödur, ‘and see not where Balder is, and have, moreover, nothing to throw with.’

“‘Come, then,’ said Loki, ‘do like the rest, and show honour to Balder by throwing this twig at him, and I will direct thy arm toward the place where he stands.’

“Hödur then took the mistletoe, and, under the guidance of Loki, darted it at Balder, who, pierced through and through, fell down lifeless.”

—*Edda*.

## NOTE 8, PAGE 138.

*Tristram and Iseult.*

“In the court of his uncle King Marc, the king of Cornwall, who at this time resided at the castle of Tyntagel, Tristram became expert in all knightly exercises.—The king of Ireland, at Tristram’s solicitations, promised to bestow his daughter Iseult in marriage on King Marc. The mother of Iseult gave to her daughter’s confidante a philtre, or love-potion, to be administered on the night of her nuptials. Of this beverage Tristram and Iseult, on their voyage to Cornwall, unfortunately partook. Its influence, during the remainder of their lives, regulated the affections and destiny of the lovers.—

“After the arrival of Tristram and Iseult in Cornwall, and the nuptials of the latter with King Marc, a great part of the romance is occupied with their contrivances to procure secret interviews.—Tristram, being forced to leave Cornwall, on account of the displeasure of his uncle, repaired to Brittany, where lived Iseult with the White Hands.—He married her—more out of gratitude than love.—Afterwards he proceeded to the dominions of Arthur, which became the theatre of unnumbered exploits.

“Tristram, subsequent to these events, returned to Brittany, and to his long-neglected wife. There, being wounded and sick, he was soon reduced to the lowest ebb. In this situation, he despatched a confidant to the queen of Cornwall, to try if he could induce her to follow him to Brittany, etc.”—DUNLOP’S *History of Fiction*.

## NOTE 9, PAGE 177.

*That son of Italy who tried to blow.*

Giacopone di Todi.

## NOTE 10, PAGE 183.

*Recalls the obscure opposer he outweigh’d.*

Gilbert de la Porrée, at the Council of Rheims, in 1148.

## NOTE 11, PAGE 184.

*Of that un pitying Phrygian sect which cried.*

The Montanists.

## NOTE 12, PAGE 184.

*Monica.*

See St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, book ix. chapter 11.



## NOTE 13, PAGE 189.

*My Marguerite smiles upon the strand.*

See, among "Early Poems," the poem called *A Memory-Picture*.

## NOTE 14, PAGE 213.

*The Hunter of the Tanagraean Field.*

Orion, the Wild Huntsman of Greek legend, and in this capacity appearing in both earth and sky.

## NOTE 15, PAGE 214.

*O'er the sun-redden'd western straits.*

Erytheia, the legendary region around the Pillars of Hercules, probably took its name from the redness of the West under which the Greeks saw it.

## NOTE 16, PAGE 273.

*The Scholar-Gipsy.*

"There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there; and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gipsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtilty of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem as that they discovered to him their mystery. After he had been a pretty while exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among the gipsies; and he gave them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such impostors as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others: that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned."—GLANVIL'S *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, 1661.

## NOTE 17, PAGE 281.

*Thyrsis.*

Throughout this poem there is reference to the preceding piece, *The Scholar-Gipsy*.

## NOTE 18, PAGE 287.

*Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth sing.*

Daphnis, the ideal Sicilian shepherd of Greek pastoral poetry, was said to have followed into Phrygia his mistress Piplea, who had been carried off by robbers, and to have found her in the power of the king of Phrygia, Lityerses. Lityerses used to make strangers try a contest with him in reaping corn, and to put them to death if he overcame them. Hercules arrived in time to save Daphnis, took upon himself the reaping-contest with Lityerses, overcame him, and slew him. The Lityerses-song connected with this tradition was, like the Linus-song, one of the early plaintive strains of Greek popular poetry, and used to be sung by corn-reapers. Other traditions represented Daphnis as beloved by a nymph who exacted from him an oath to love no one else. He fell in love with a princess, and was struck blind by the jealous nymph. Mercury, who was his father, raised him to Heaven, and made a fountain spring up in the place from which he ascended. At this fountain the Sicilians offered yearly sacrifices.— See Servius, *Comment. in Virgil. Bucol.*, v. 20, and viii. 68.

## NOTE 19, PAGE 294.

*Ah! where is he, who should have come.*

The author's brother, William Delafield Arnold, Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab, and author of *Oakfield, or Fellowship in the East*, died at Gibraltar on his way home from India, April the 9th, 1859.

## NOTE 20, PAGE 295,

*So moonlit, saw me once of yore.*

See the poem, *A Summer Night*, p. 257.

## NOTE 21, PAGE 295.

*My brother! and thine early lot.*

See Note 19.

## NOTE 22, PAGE 299.

*I saw the meeting of two  
Gifted women.*

Charlotte Brontë and Harriet Martineau.

NOTE 23, PAGE 302.

*Whose too bold dying song.*

See the last verses by Emily Brontë in *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell*.

NOTE 24, PAGE 317.

*Goethe, too, had been there.*

See *Harzreise im Winter*, in Goethe's *Gedichte*.

NOTE 25, PAGE 325.

The author of *Obermann*, Étienne Pivert de Senancour, has little celebrity in France, his own country; and out of France he is almost unknown. But the profound inwardness, the austere sincerity, of his principal work, *Obermann*, the delicate feeling for nature which it exhibits, and the melancholy eloquence of many passages of it, have attracted and charmed some of the most remarkable spirits of this century, such as George Sand and Sainte-Beuve, and will probably always find a certain number of spirits whom they touch and interest.

Senancour was born in 1770. He was educated for the priesthood, and passed some time in the seminary of St. Sulpice; broke away from the Seminary and from France itself, and passed some years in Switzerland, where he married; returned to France in middle life, and followed thenceforward the career of a man of letters, but with hardly any fame or success. He died an old man in 1846, desiring that on his grave might be placed these words only: *Éternité, deviens mon asile!*

The influence of Rousseau, and certain affinities with more famous and fortunate authors of his own day,—Chateaubriand and Madame de Staël,—are everywhere visible in Senancour. But though, like these eminent personages, he may be called a sentimental writer, and though *Obermann*, a collection of letters from Switzerland treating almost entirely of nature and of the human soul, may be called a work of sentiment, Senancour has a gravity and severity which distinguish him from all other writers of the sentimental school. The world is with him in his solitude far less than it is with them; of all writers he is the most perfectly isolated and the least attitudinising. His chief work, too, has a value and power of its own, apart from these merits of its author. The stir of all the main forces, by which modern life is and has been impelled, lives in the letters of *Obermann*; the dissolving agencies of the eighteenth century, the fiery storm of the French Revolution, the first faint promise and dawn of that new world

which our own time is but now more fully bringing to light,—all these are to be felt, almost to be touched, there. To me, indeed, it will always seem that the impressiveness of this production can hardly be rated too high.

Besides *Obermann* there is one other of Senancour's works which, for those spirits who feel his attraction, is very interesting; its title is, *Libres Méditations d'un Solitaire Inconnu*.

NOTE 26, PAGE 326.

*Behind are the abandon'd baths.*

The Baths of Leuk. This poem was conceived, and partly composed, in the valley going down from the foot of the Gemmi Pass towards the Rhone.

NOTE 27, PAGE 332.

*Glion?—Ah, twenty years, it cuts.*

Probably all who know the Vevey end of the Lake of Geneva, will recollect Glion, the mountain-village above the castle of Chillon. Glion now has hotels, *pensions*, and villas; but twenty years ago it was hardly more than the huts of Avant opposite to it,—huts through which goes that beautiful path over the Col de Jaman, followed by so many foot-travellers on their way from Vevey to the Simmenthal and Thun.

NOTE 28, PAGE 333.

*The gentian-flower'd pass, its crown  
With yellow spires aflame.*

The blossoms of the *Gentiana lutea*.

NOTE 29, PAGE 333.

*And walls where Byron came.*

Montbovon. See Byron's Journal, in his *Works*, vol. iii. p. 258. The river Saane becomes the Sarine below Montbovon.

NOTE 30, PAGE 429.

*And the kind, chance-arrived Wanderer.*

Poias, the father of Philoctetes. Passing near, he was attracted by the concourse round the pyre, and at the entreaty of Hercules set fire to it, receiving the bow and arrows of the hero as his reward.

## NOTE 31, PAGE 462.

*And that curst treachery on the Mount of Gore.*

Mount Hæmus, so called, said the legend, from Typho's blood spilt on it in his last battle with Zeus, when the giant's strength failed, owing to the Destinies having a short time before given treacherously to him, for his refreshment, perishable fruits. See APOLLODORUS, *Bibliotheca*, book i. chap. vi.

## NOTE 32, PAGE 468

*Ye Sun-born Virgins! on the road of truth.*

See the Fragments of Parmenides :

. . . . . κούραι δ' ὄδδ' ἠγεμόνευον,  
 ἠλιάδες κούραι, προλιποῦσαι δώματα νυκτός,  
 εἰς φάος . . . . .

## NOTE 33, PAGE 479.

*Couldst thou no better keep, O Abbey old,  
 The boon thy dedication-sign foretold.*

“Ailred of Rievaulx, and several other writers, assert that Sebert, king of the East Saxons and nephew of Ethelbert, founded the Abbey of Westminster very early in the seventh century.

“Sulcardus, who lived in the time of William the Conqueror, gives a minute account of the miracle supposed to have been worked at the consecration of the Abbey.

“The church had been prepared against the next day for dedication. On the night preceding, St. Peter appeared on the opposite side of the water to a fisherman, desiring to be conveyed to the farther shore. Having left the boat, St. Peter ordered the fisherman to wait, promising him a reward on his return. An innumerable host from heaven accompanied the apostle, singing choral hymns, while everything was illuminated with a supernatural light. The dedication having been completed, St. Peter returned to the fisherman, quieted his alarm at what had passed, and announced himself as the apostle. He directed the fisherman to go as soon as it was day to the authorities, to state what he had seen and heard, and to inform them that, in corroboration of his testimony, they would find the marks of consecration on the walls of the church. In obedience to the apostle's direction, the fisherman waited on Mellitus, Bishop of London, who, going to the church, found not only marks of the chrisim, but of the tapers with which the church had been illuminated. Mellitus, therefore,

desisted from proceeding to a new consecration, and contented himself with the celebration of the mass.”—DUGDALE, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (edition of 1817), vol. i. pp. 265, 266. See also MONTALEMBERT, *Les Moines d'Occident*, vol. iii. pp. 428-432.

NOTE 34, PAGE 482.

*The charm'd babe of the Eleusinian king.*

Demophoön, son of Celeus, king of Eleusis. See, in the *Homeric Hymns*, the *Hymn to Demeter*, 184-298.

NOTE 35, PAGE 483.

*That Pair, whose head did plan, whose hands did forge  
The Temple in the pure Parnassian gorge.*

Agamedes and Trophonius, the builders of the temple of Apollo at Delphi. See Plutarch, *Consolatio ad Apollonium*, c. 14.

NOTE 36, PAGE 493.

*Stol'n from Aristophanes.*

See *The Birds* of Aristophanes, 465-485.

NOTE 37, PAGE 495.

*Of Robin's reed.*

<sup>1</sup> “Come, join the melancholious croon  
O' Robin's reed.”—BURNS, *Poor Mailie's Elegy*.

THE END.









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